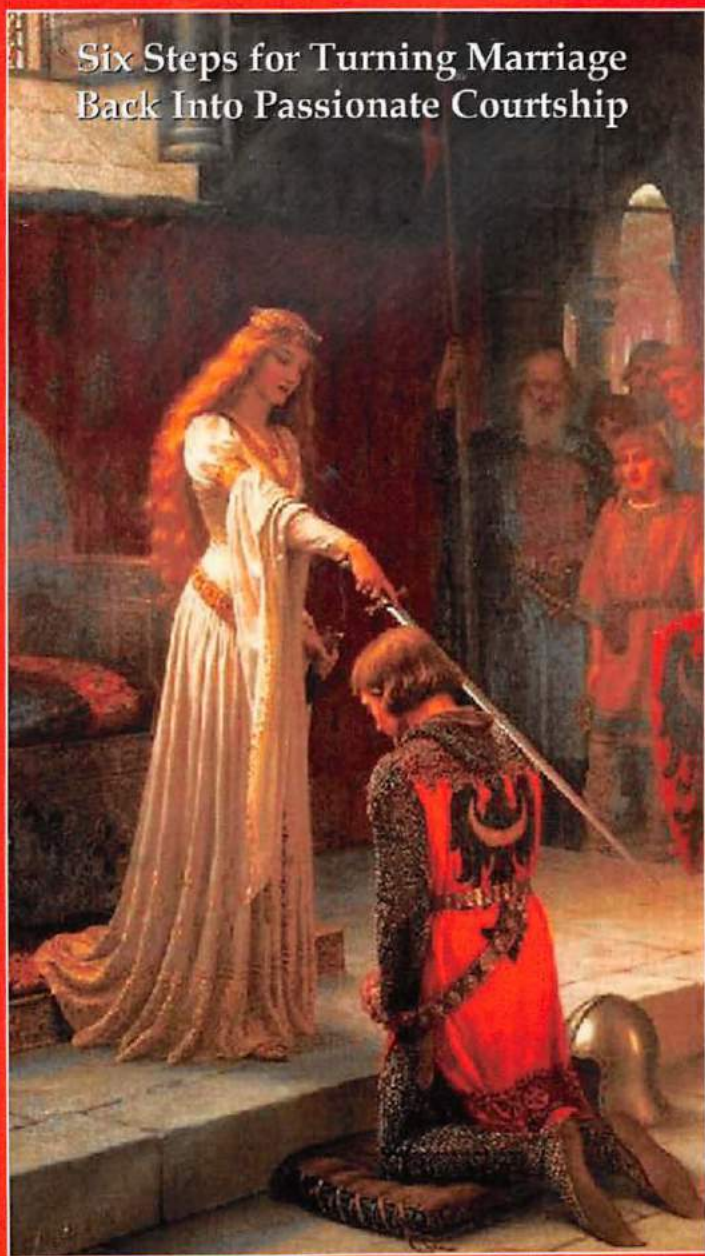


WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

Six Steps for Turning Marriage
Back Into Passionate Courtship



BY MARK REMOND

Worshipping Your Wife

*Six Steps for Turning Marriage
Back Into Passionate Courtship*



Mark Remond

Lulu.com

© 2008 by Mark Remond
All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-1-4357-1597-4

Printed in the United States of America

Acknowledgment and Disclaimer: As noted several places in the text, the uncredited quotations appearing in this book were gleaned over a period of many years from a variety of online sources—newsgroups, forums, bulletin boards, guestbooks and social networking sites, as well as individual emails to me—all dealing with aspects of “wife worship.” To the pseudonymous originators of these insights, I acknowledge my considerable debt. While the quoted excerpts remain faithful to the original postings, some have been slightly altered or paraphrased for reasons of discretion.

Email: markremond@yahoo.com

Portions of this book first appeared on my website:
<http://wifeworship.tripod.com/home.htm>

For my wife

“Marriage is no excuse for not loving.”

—Andreas Cappellanus

The Art of Honorable Love, 13th century

***“Why should I go out for hamburger
when I can have steak at home?”***

—Paul Newman

***“Boyfriends need to understand
that if women are worshipped,
the world will be a better place.”***

—Nicole Kidman

***“If you want your wife to be a Goddess,
worship her.”***

—Clairette de Longvilliers

Contents

	Introduction: Rekindling the Fire	1
1	Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places	4
2	Making <i>Her</i> Your Fantasy	12
3	Perpetual Courtship	20
4	A Playful Step Beyond	30
5	Pampering and Pitching In	38
6	Daring to Be Known by Her	54
7	Bonus Points: Motivational Magic	68
8	Happy-Ever-Aftering Takes Work	76
	Afterword—Advice to Wives:	
	How Can I Get My Husband to Read This Stuff?	99

INTRODUCTION: REKINDLING THE FIRE

"The thrill is gone."

It's the lament of so many married couples. Familiarity and routine, recriminations and disappointments, take a predictable toll on happy-ever-aftering. Husbands and wives drift apart, physically and emotionally, or maintain alliances of custom and convenience, keepers of a flickering flame.

There seems a sad inevitability in all this. Love has its seasons, as John Gray reminds us in *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. It's folly to expect eternal springtime, perpetual romance. Most marriage counselors would agree. Divorce attorneys can be even more pragmatic. They know that once the cancer of disaffection has spread, the damage is almost always irreversible.

But what if it's not necessarily true? What if love can be rekindled, even the all-consuming passion of first love? And not rekindled briefly, for just a season, but "ever after," creating that fairytale future couples dream about when saying their vows?

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

That it can happen—and happen to you—is the extravagant claim of *Worshipping Your Wife*.

“Courtship was 15 or 16 years ago for my wife and me,” one husband eloquently testified. “I’ve been able to resurrect those feelings. It’s about putting my best foot forward all the time, treating her with respect, love and courtesy. It’s about being obsessed with pleasing her, generally giving her to understand that she will never be taken for granted. In making her the principal focus of my energy, I have given myself more happiness and purpose than I could ever have imagined.”

The transformations described in *Worshipping Your Wife* are real, the ideas workable, as I continue to discover (and am told by other couples who have tried them). “What women seek is total experience in the relationship” was another husband’s belated discovery. He elaborated: “Women love to be worshipped, not just seduced in bed. And why restrict sex to the bedroom? Why not eroticize the entire relationship?”

Are these prescriptions for men? Yes, and for women to hand-deliver to the men in their lives, with salty or salient passages highlighted. Because *Worshipping Your Wife* is devoid of psychobabble and replete with what motivates men to get involved romantically in the first place—sex.

Worshipping Your Wife recommends a return to courtship, that time when a guy and a girl found each other most mysterious and magnetic. What if your marriage had only a ho-hum courtship? *Worshipping Your Wife* will show you how to turn up the heat the second time around.

Husbands who follow these formulas find a funny and wondrous thing happening. Not only are they transformed, but so are their mates. Wives, viewed through the radiant prism of adoration, regain the full mystery of their sex. And husbands, by elevating their wives, find themselves becoming romantically

INTRODUCTION: REKINDLING THE FIRE

obsessed again. Marriages, even after years of dormancy, begin to pulse with a new and potent eroticism.

The dynamics of this passionate reversion are detailed. But consider this: Courtship and reconciliation are clearly defined crises in a man's life. He will do anything to win the woman of his dreams; should he lose her, he will do anything to win her back. Why, then, is he not willing to do anything, on a daily basis, to keep her contented? Because husbands don't perceive that a wife can be lost if never again wooed or won, that marriage is also a crisis, deserving of extreme efforts. This is not punishment, but reward: His wife is more than worthy of the very best he can give.

Without further preamble, here's the entire six-step program—for the husband. (The wife's job, obviously, is to encourage him to "get with it" as soon as possible; for some help on that, see my advice to wives in a brief appendix: "How Can I Get My Husband to Read This Stuff?")

The husband needs to:

1. Realize that "the thrill is gone" and that he wants to get it back.
2. Save his sex energies for his wife.
3. Make *her* his fantasy.
4. Court her every day, attempt to win her anew.
5. Pamper her and pitch in around the house.
6. Dare to be known by her.

For the details, please read on...



LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Why do so many couples fall out of love? What makes the passion ebb, the magic vanish?

Could it be the saggy sweatpants, or the shapeless flannel nightgown? The shaving stubble in the sink, or the makeup residue? The angry outburst, or the silent fault-finding? The shared bathroom and shared exhaustion? The insidious effect of familiarity?

Is it, ultimately, the Invasion of the Little People?

Or, cumulatively, all of the above?

And does it even matter, really, why it happens, if it's just plain inevitable? That, in fact, seems to be the prevailing wisdom among therapists and counselors. Not only is the ebbing of passion inevitable, we are told and consoled, but a necessary evolution. It is merely love's next phase.

Most love songs and stories, after all, celebrate only love's initial, incendiary phase. But mutual combustibility cannot be sustained forever. For a relationship to grow and mature, the white-hot fires of passion need to subside, to be banked into a

LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

steady, comforting glow.

Are they right? Is that why passions ebb? Because they must?

The Big Lie

Rather than answer that question, I prefer to ignore it. Because it's irrelevant. *Because passion doesn't ebb, magic doesn't vanish.* Sex energies are the fastest in the body, and they don't go away just because a marriage cools down.

I presume to speak only for husbands now—not all of us, of course, but enough of us, I suspect, that my generalizations will prove useful—and embarrassing. Because not many husbands will willingly admit to the dirty little secret I'm about to betray: *Our fantasy lives continue unabated, but increasingly focused away from our wives.*

"Isn't it amazing how some men who are so romantic before marriage can become so unromantic afterward?" asks psychologist Gary Smalley.¹

No, not amazing at all. These are not modern behaviors, but the products of millions of years of evolutionary engineering. Down on the most instinctive level, for the male of the species, "romance" equates to the stalking-hunting phase. The pickup lines have been updated from caveman days—"clubbing," for instance, has a very different meaning—but underneath the trendy trappings, the primal instincts are almost unchanged.

This may sound like cartoon pop psychology, but it's true. The successful chase still culminates in capture and impregnation (as far as the evolutionary imperative is concerned). At that point, the "romance" is complete—for the male. His next big assignment is to stand at the cave door with his club, ready to bash away any saber-toothed tigers, rogue males or other wandering predators. Safely back there in the cave, meanwhile, the female can get on with the messy and mysterious business of perpetuating the species.

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

And, all the instinctive string-pulling notwithstanding, it *is* romantic. It's the miracle of love—and commitment. As author George Gilder puts it: "Women manipulate male sexual desire in order to teach men the long-term cycles of female sexuality and biology on which civilization is based."²

And thank God for that!

Primitive Sitcom

Just how she manipulates this dumb brute, who is interested only in sex, so she can count on him to stand by while she's in labor, is one of the wonders of nature. The problem is, while he's doing his dutiful guy thing—scanning the bushes for danger or dinner on the hoof—he's not immune to other stimuli. The spoor of a passing she-creature, for instance. He can't help it. His receptors *have* to be wide open—which means subject to hormonal triggers—or he wouldn't be any good out there. So right in the middle of his stalwart sentry duty, our happy husband and soon-to-be father is prey to random, reproductive yearnings. Unseemly, but true. Males never outgrow their fantasies, the thrill of the hunt.

"Men," as Dr. Laura informed one of her callers, "are dogs!"

Except it's not their noses that human males follow, but their eyes. In most cases, our libido is triggered by visual stimuli (with other senses ready to kick in). Men are verbally abused for looking at all women as sex objects. It's true, of course, but we're *supposed* to! It's in our DNA, our sealed genetic orders. In the lingo of *Star Trek*, you could call it our Prime Directive: *Go forth and seek out all females of nubile appearance, with hips ample for gestation and childbirth, breasts ripe for lactation and suckling.*

Neanderthal Defense

Guys don't think of it in those terms, of course, but you get

the general idea. Unconsciously, our ideas of female beauty derive from biological specifications. When man the hunter is culling the female herd, his priorities are neither quality of mind nor personality.

"Hey," a husband will protest, "if I wasn't looking at other women, I'd be dead."

This hallowed Neanderthal defense, while not usually effective, is again essentially true. In a contemporary social setting, a roving male eye may be objectionable or intolerable, but it is biology, not pathology. It's also true that men are constantly bombarded and manipulated by visual erotica, images of the female anatomy used to seduce and sell. Not that I expect any sympathy for our plight. Unlike children, most adult males are willing victims of this media titillation.

My point is that it is difficult for a husband to keep his fantasy life faithful, to cast his wife in every R- and X-rated movie in his mind. Just as it's difficult—and damnably unfair—for his wife's body to be matched against those of swimsuit models and centerfold girls, eternally youthful and cosmetically enhanced. But men *do* make that comparison, instinctively, compulsively.

But Even Jimmy Carter Did It!

Does real damage to a marriage occur when the husband's fantasy life strays from his wife? "If your fantasies leave your mate coming up short, then fantasies may not be helpful to your relationship," admits family therapist Pat Love.³ "If you are fantasizing about Michele Pfeiffer, you are missing an opportunity to bond with your partner." Can such erotic diversions cause the sexual thermostat to turn down at home, the intensity and frequency of intercourse to diminish?

Not necessarily. But increasingly likely—if it leads to sexual gratification outside of marriage. A *Playboy* in the office drawer, or netporn on the browser, may constitute a minor infidelity of

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

the imagination, yet serve to whet the appetite for wifely delights. But damage does occur if the stimulation leads only to auto-eroticism rather than passionate conjugal love-making. To masturbation instead of marital combustion.

Definitely not good! It's not a matter of morals here, but what works to strengthen a marriage, and what doesn't.

Too often, of course, mental or emotional infidelity can lead to real infidelity—or to chronic masturbation, solo and secretive, which can rob a marriage of its binding energies.

The Jerkov Compulsion

No, masturbation won't induce blindness or sprout hair on the palms. The consensus among health professionals is that self-gratification is not only harmless, but healthful—particularly for hormone-crazed teenagers. But a husband who indulges in this little unshared pleasure may start to feel increasingly defensive and quarrelsome toward his wife and not even know why. Subconsciously, at least, he may realize that he is cheating the marriage, siphoning fuel from the combustion chambers. That all those energies are owed to his wife. That lust and loyalty should be united, not separated.

"Many is the time I wondered why my husband didn't feel like sex, only to realize later that he had probably already had it, with himself!"—*One wife's complaint*

Am I exaggerating the problem—or its prevalence?

I don't think so!

Masturbation is by all accounts the most common human sexual practice, and statistical trendlines on frequency of male masturbation tend to be off the charts. Apparently it's even popular on honeymoons. "Ninety-nine percent of men of all ages masturbate regularly," claims sex educator and counselor Sue Johanson, "and the other one percent are liars."⁴

In Donald Margulies' Pulitzer Prize-winning comedy, *Dinner*

LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

With Friends, two husbands, discussing sex and marriage, have the following exchange:⁵

TOM: "I must've masturbated more than any man in history."

GABE: "I doubt that."

At the performance I attended, this detonated raucous laughter from the men in the audience. Did women in the audience wonder at this explosive reaction from their husbands or boy-friends?

I laughed, too. But not as nervously as I might have done just a few years back.

That's when I began to sense something gone slightly south in my own marriage. Not a crisis—at least I hoped not—but a definite drop-off. A decline in passion and in frequency of love-making. My sexual fantasy life was no longer riveted on my wife. Worse, not only had I entertained vagrant erotic fantasies, but—excuse me for getting personal—I had masturbated to them, while too often neglecting the erotic prize at home.

Okay, that's as embarrassing and confessional as I'm going to get. But there's a reason for doing so.

Was I unfaithful? Technically, perhaps, no. But as far as the spirit of the marriage vows I had pledged, yes. No contest. I was guilty. I had strayed. The gulf I sensed opening between my wife and me—including the actual sleeping distance between us—was of my own making.

And with that shaming, seismic realization, I did see a real crisis looming. A crisis which precipitated immediate action, or the need therefor. I had to do something.

Marriage Vows Revisited

I made a vow—a marriage vow: From that moment on, to keep myself only for her. But what exactly did that mean? I

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

couldn't quarantine erotic thoughts of others. Sorry, not possible, as I damn well knew. But, I told myself, I *could* prevent diversion of my sexual energy away from our marriage bed. Which meant no masturbation. No orgasm—without my wife's participation.

Ever. Period.

Let lust and love be rejoined.

Noble and admirable sentiments, you will agree. One small problem arose at this point, however. For most males, masturbation is a lifelong habit (I seem to be avoiding the word “vice”), which starts in early adolescence and usually just continues—right on to senescence. And right through most (or too many) marriages. And so it was for me. Which puts it right up there with other addictive or compulsive behaviors—smoking, drinking, maybe even breathing. What made me think I could go cold turkey? At the very least, I thought, I would require a twelve-step program, a support group. At the most, divine intervention.

But try as I might, I couldn't quite rationalize myself out of my resolve. Because I passionately wanted to do this. Because I loved my wife and wanted to be in love with her again, head over heels. Because I'd somehow lost my way and wanted things to be as they had been—heck, even better than they'd been.

And because I sensed, if only I would do this, if only I *could* do it, it could be the catalyst for recapturing the magic in our marriage. For turning up the thermostat, heating up the marriage bed. For recapturing honeymoon fever, returning my wife to her rightful place as Eve to my Adam—my seductress, my enchantress, my wife.

Making *her* my fantasy.

How this actually happened for me, and how it can happen for you, is the subject of the next chapter.

¹ *For Better or For Best*, HarperPaperbacks, 1982, p. 20.

² *Men and Marriage*, Pelican Publishing Co., 1992, p. 13.

³ Author of *The Truth About Love*, Plume/Penguin Books, 2001; cited in *Los Angeles Times* story, Dec. 24, 2001.

⁴ Quoted by Jack Boulware, "Sex Educator Says Most People Masturbate," in *Salon Magazine* (<http://www.salonmag.com>), May 9, 2000.

⁵ *Dinner With Friends*, Dramatists Play Service, 2000, p. 37.



MAKING *HER* YOUR FANTASY

An old *Playboy* cartoon showed a dumpy, middle-aged couple making love, while overhead, in thought-balloons, their imaginary partners were also getting it on—a Playmate for him, Mr. Universe for her.

Does this kind of infidelity of the imagination happen much to longtime couples? Sure it does.

Is it funny? Sure, the way the whole human comedy is funny. It's also sad—even if it helps keep the home fires flickering.

To be with one person while conjuring another isn't exactly wholehearted, but it is understandable. The look of love, so easy on the first or second date, can be hard to muster on the thousandth. Time (once past our roaring twenties) is no flatterer, and familiarity exacts a heavy toll on the erotic imagination. That old black magic, invoked too often, tends to lose its mojo.

What's the solution?

Recapturing the Magic

How about a real-life Love Potion No. 9, a potent concoction, which, "on sleeping eyelids laid," could "make or man or

woman madly dote"?¹ You would just pour out twin shots for every jaded husband and wife, have them take two brave gulps, and then watch them recapture their first-date fascination for each other.

By now you should know that I believe there is such a miracle elixir of love. And while I can't exactly give it a name or bottle it, I *can* offer a formula.

The first ingredient, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, is a solemn resolve on the part of the husband to fall back in love with his wife. Back in love *and* lust.

Ingredient No. 2, also discussed at some length, is for him to stop sexually pleasuring himself. (At least for a while, if we're going to be serious here.)

The third and final ingredient is time. And probably not too much of it. Abstinence definitely makes the heart grow fonder—fairly rapidly, in fact—and has a heckuva stimulating effect on the endocrine system, to boot.

What happens next?

In my case, it was subtle at first. During the day I found myself thinking about her. You know, my *wife*. The girl I married. The one I slept with every night. Thinking about her smile, her voice, her shape, her warmth—"the trace," as Henry Higgins remarked wistfully, "of something in the air."²

The Hovering Wife

Soon it wasn't so subtle. I began thinking about her a lot. Daydreaming about her. Tripping out on tactile replays of her morning embrace, recalling the warm smell of her hair, the salty taste of her skin. She went, in the words of another song, from being "gentle on my mind" to being very intrusive. In fact, I was thinking about her all the time. What I *wasn't* thinking about, or lusting after, were glamourized images of other females. Those had vaporized.

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

No, it was my wife who followed me around, teasing my consciousness and other parts. After several such days, I decided to tell her what was happening. What I had been doing. What I was no longer doing. And why I had stopped doing it.

She was truly puzzled by my confession—and its motivation. She hadn't suspected that I had been masturbating. She had simply accepted that things had cooled off between us. Maybe she thought it inevitable, the way it happens with so many couples. Or that it was her fault—that she was no longer attractive.

I assured her the problem was with me, not her. I did a lot of talking, probably too much, trying to explain, for her benefit and mine, what I thought had gone wrong between us, and how I was convinced our romantic relationship could go right again. Could, in fact, be better than ever.

She was not only puzzled now, but skeptical. Clearly, words weren't going to convince her.

Here is where that third ingredient—time—had to be allowed to work its gradual magic. It took time for us to grow apart. It would take more time—yet not as much—for us to come back together.

I was patient, persistent, attentive. Like a suitor. Tiny gestures, compliments, endearments, all helped to erode her defenses. Every now and then she'd catch me looking at her in a special way, a way I hadn't looked at her for a long time. As if she was dessert.

The next time we made love, there was more tenderness and more combustion. And, may I add, the female creature hovering in my thought-balloon was the same darling girl I was in bed with.

Love at First Sight—All Over Again

I was back in phase, as I had been when we first discovered each other, when we made love every night. It felt right. It felt

MAKING *HER* YOUR FANTASY

fantastic.

Love and lust together again.

Too simple?

Perhaps. But it worked—for me, and for many other husbands whom I subsequently compared notes with online. (I'll get to their quotes in a moment.)

Here's my analysis of *why* it worked:

Men *need* sexual fantasy. It's the highest-octane fuel they can burn. They do idealize womanhood. They do empedestal their girlfriends. To woo and win them (and beat off all competitors).

Once I stopped siphoning off the fuel needed for the marital combustion chambers, my sexual fantasies automatically re-focused on my wife. She suddenly regained the status she possessed during courtship—seductress, enchantress. The creature to be pursued and won, again and again.

Years later, on the Web, I came across this bit of advice, attributed only to a "Clever Wife":

"Keep him out of his fantasy world, and he will have no other choice but to join you in the real world of your relationship and all the intimacies he normally can escape from."

Amen to that.

Think back. Wasn't there a time when *she* was your fantasy figure, the centerfold of your inflamed imagination? Remember how she appeared then—a creature of infinite mystery, infinitely desirable? How you behaved in her presence?

Start behaving toward her that way again, treating her with that same homage, and the deadening scales of familiarity will dissolve, and you will see her restored to full, feminine glory.

And what if you never saw her with adoring eyes? Pretend you did and do—and you will! Empower her, put her on a pedestal, and she will become the focus of your fantasy life—as she should be.

The Queen Restored

"If you want your wife to be a Goddess, worship her."

The advice of another "mystery woman," Clairette de Longvilliers—and so true that I made it an epigraph of this book.

I say this with such confidence, again, not just because it happened to me, but because it has happened in exactly the same way to other husbands who posted enthusiastically on various Internet forums and newsgroups. Here's a sampling:

One confided: "In nine years of marriage, I have never felt so intimate and fully connected to her. Her look, her words, her thoughts, remain on my mind all day long."

Another wrote: "I've spent more than my share of time 'net-surfing in a search for what was really under my nose all the time, a really great wife for me to worship and honor."

These husbands found themselves becoming romantically obsessed again. Marriages, even after years of dormancy, began to pulse with a new and potent eroticism. And all these starry-eyed guys out there were following the same formula—worshipping their wives.

And, just for good measure, here's the testimony of a wife on the receiving end of such adoration: "I'm in my fifties and gravity is winning more and more every day. But in the eyes and mind of my husband, I am beautiful—I am his queen—and he shows it to me every minute of every day."

These husbands are lucky men, the kind who can't wait to get home at the end of the day, with maybe a quick stop en route at a florist or chocolate shop. Who can't wait to get the little ones tucked in and safely asleep, or to arrange a getaway weekend *à deux*.

The Boomerang Effect

Do they still flick through the Victoria's Secret catalogue on the way back from the mailbox? Of course. Do they discreetly

check out the *SI* swimsuit issue at the supermarket, or this year's bikini crop on the beach? You bet. But such fantasies boomerang faithfully back to their bedmates. They find it's lots more fun to play in bed with their wife or girlfriend than with the TV remote. They start holding hands in the movies and generally behaving like lovestruck adolescent boys.

Just how is that boomerang effect supposed to work, you wonder, so that erotic fantasies only refocus you guys back on your wives?

Good question.

Actually, this benign boomerang effect will occur only if the husband has begun focusing his fantasy life on his mate. Otherwise (as discussed in chapter one) he will react to the ceaseless bombardment of visual erotica like any red-blooded male, which is to say pretty much like a bird dog scenting a pheasant. Nor does it take a thong bikini or a Miss March foldout for these primal instincts to kick in and lead a guy astray. "A glimpse of stocking,"³ as Cole Porter observed, can do the trick. Or even a pair of unveiled almond eyes in certain Islamic societies. Susceptible Adam must be protected from seductive Eve, even if it requires her to wear a pup tent in public.

But it's not necessary to quarantine women, or men, in order to protect the sanctity of marriage. A man caught up in wife worship is enwrapped in a wifely aura, a kind of invisible mesh that protects him from temptation.

But that's not quite accurate either. Temptation still exists. The siren song is all around, and male receptors ever attuned to the pitch. In a recently published study, 98 percent of responding heterosexual men reported having sexual fantasies about someone other than a partner during a two-month period.⁴ But the effect, at least in my case, is not the same as it was. I am titillated, but not addleheaded; curious, but unforgetful of my marital bond. A far more potent spell has been cast upon me, polarizing

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

me and rendering lesser spells harmless.

In fact, here is where the boomerang effect kicks in. The more I am stimulated by a passing fancy, the more I am redirected to thoughts of my wife. I don't exactly know how this rewiring or reprogramming happened, but it did, and it's pretty nifty. I can just appreciate the wondrousness of womanhood from a safe distance. Let others pursue; I can celebrate with a passing glance.

Like any guy, of course, I am flattered to be noticed by a woman, to be perceived as still in the hunt, though I am not. But I remain happily domesticated, not really wanting to be a part of the wild bunch in the adjoining woods.

I belong, after all, to *her*.

Under Her Spell for Keeps

"I no longer fantasize about anyone else," a husband wrote, "but think only of her constantly. With the pressures of raising children and of life in general, we had lost that. Glad to have rediscovered it! She has become everything to me once again, and in the process is fulfilling my long-held fantasies."

I don't expect my wife to look like a pinup. Nor do I need to superimpose some improbable alter ego over her familiar flesh and form, like the jaded couple in the *Playboy* cartoon. She's not in competition with false fantasies, or even earlier versions of herself—the way she looked, say, on our honeymoon. It would be *mondo bizarro* if she did. I want her to look just the way she does: "Don't imagine you're too familiar, And I don't see you anymore... I want you just the way you are."⁵

As a brief aside, let me say that this is another gift you can give your wife: Be adoring, be accepting, be the safe haven where she can be totally and comfortably herself. Because you accept her just the way she is, it's easier for her to accept herself. This can have a healing effect on her psyche—particularly if

she's dissatisfied with her body or her looks—and provide a well-deserved boost for her ego.⁶

So a “faithful fantasy life” is not oxymoronic. It's not even that hard to achieve. It's right there, waiting for you to discover. The grass really *is* greener on this side of the fence.

What happens next? Do you rush home and pounce on your wife, fueled by your erotic visions? Well, maybe. As a husband newly converted to wife worship, however, I found myself spun back to those early, topsy-turvy days when the darling girl was still unattained.

In fact, those “early days” are becoming a permanent state of affairs, at least when I'm functioning romantically. After too many years of taking her for granted, it has dawned on me that my wife will always remain a prize to be won.

The Next Step

So the next step is courtship. Perpetual courtship. Heart-galloping, Scope-gargling, can't-wait-to-get-home courtship.

A wacky, wonderful way to live.

Especially for husbands. Please read on.

¹ Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, I, 2, 170-1.

² Alan Jay Lerner, from “Accustomed to Her Face,” *My Fair Lady*.

³ Cole Porter, “Anything Goes.”

⁴ Drs. Hicks and Leitenberg of the University of Vermont, *Journal of Sex Research*, February, 2002; cited in *Los Angeles Times* story, Dec. 24, 2001.

⁵ Billy Joel, “Just the Way You Are.”

⁶ A *Psychology Today* survey published in the summer of 2001 found that 56 percent of women are dissatisfied with their bodies.

3

PERPETUAL COURTSHIP

“He has an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person....”¹

This description of the Great Gatsby could be applied, with minor adjustments, to Lancelot or Don Quixote, to Rhett Butler or Owen Wister’s “Virginian.” Pick your own romantic hero of fable, fiction or film. These guys are all fixated on a single, idealized female, their romantic readiness maintained at a fever pitch.

Unfortunately, their impossible dreams rarely come true.

Obstacles to Love

Blame the storytellers. Whenever things threaten to go smoothly, you can count on some unforeseen disaster before too many pages. (Which is why “Obstacles to Love” is one of the most common dramatic situations.²) The reason is obvious. Once the last dragon is slain and the princess is encastled (and inseminated), the tale is told. There’s nothing more to keep the reader, or listener, spellbound.

New perils must be concocted—the bride abducted, let’s say,

PERPETUAL COURTSHIP

forcing the hero to saddle up his old warhorse and ride out to the rescue.

Which brings us right back to Wife Worship—and perpetual courtship.



If a marriage is to be a compelling and continuing love story—and that's the goal here—it must obey the same rules. Romance must be reinvented, with new romantic challenges thrown in the way of the suitor (lawful husband though he be).

Otherwise his quest is over. The princess is left to languish in the castle keep, watching *Oprah!* and wondering where the magic went. While her conquering mate, stripped of her work and shining armor, daydreams of other pursuits (and maybe other damsels), watching ESPN on the other set.

But: If given the choice, he would prefer to fight again for her, to be brave for her.

"Man's greatest motivating force," wrote self-help legend Napoleon Hill, "is his desire to please woman!"³

And the husband *does* have the choice; he can get his quest back. An endless quest, like Quixote's, or Sisyphus', or even Roadrunner's. But futility will not be his reward. If he makes the right moves, he keeps getting the girl—over and over and over!

In other words, perpetual courtship.

Dynamic vs. Static Marriage

The truth is, perpetual courtship is not an artificial contrivance, a trick foisted upon credulous husbands. It is an arrangement in harmony with our own biological natures, male

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

and female.

And even if it wasn't, who cares? It works! What wife can hold out against continuous, insidious courtship? How can she *not* be susceptible?

A husband needs to be up and chasing after his wife, not resting on his laurels or his Laz-E-Boy. A wife needs to be pursued and panted after—to have her bloomers charmed off her on a daily basis.

And, oh by the way, the husband can forget about trading her in at some later date for a new-model trophy wife. *She's* his trophy wife. In perpetuity.

That's the secret of a fairytale marriage, the happy-ever-after fadeout. It's a marriage in which the courting never stops. As female-empowerment advocate Fumika Misato observes: "This is a marriage in which your husband courts you until death do you part."⁴

Saturday Night Fever

Once the husband accepts this mind-set, he is likely to find himself back in adolescent mode.

Forty-year-old dads start waxing the family car for the big date. Gargling and flossing. Pumping rusty iron in the garage. Sucking in the gut so they can buckle on the old shining armor.

"I find this to be the best time of my life," one long-married suitor wrote. "I shower her with praise, adoration and my best efforts to please her."

"I suddenly realize I need to improve myself for her," chimed in another, "so I'm losing the weight and plan to get in much better shape for her."

Need I go on? Okay, here's one more giddy testimonial: "Although in my 50's, I seem to be showing all the symptoms of young love. I've even lost my appetite."

Again, according to Napoleon Hill, there exists no more pow-

erful engine for self-improvement than romantic obsession. (More about this in Chapter 7, “Motivational Magic.”)

Size Matters

Grand romantic gestures never go out of style. “Diamonds,” as the De Beers cartel reminds us, “are forever.” Heaven knows, the wife deserves any luxuries the courting husband can shower her with—and more.

But most wives expect (or may demand) to be consulted on extravagances—even if it’s for them! That’s okay. Small offerings are good, too, and may even outpoint lavish items over time, especially if such impromptu love tokens become daily rituals.

“Have little surprises up your sleeve,” one well-courted wife counsels. “These needn’t even cost anything. Love notes, treats, surprise phone calls, a picnic in the park, adoring messages on her voicemail. An online greeting card.”

Her husband’s brain, this wife boasted, began spontaneously percolating amorous ideas, one after another. The trick, she suggests, is for husbands to wake up in the night thinking: “What can I do for her?”⁵

“It’s more important to invest time, than money, in pleasing your queen,” is another husband’s advice. “Just do something every day.”

Listen Up!

“Listening to my wife is very important,” another man advises. “Sometimes she will make some offhand remark about what she would like to see or have. I keep a small notepad and jot it down. Then, when the opportunity arises, I will surprise her with something that she hasn’t necessarily expected.”

Such surprises, by the way, count extra—according to courtship guidelines I found on a couples bulletin board:

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

"In the world of romance, one single rule applies. Make the woman happy. Do something she likes, you get a point. Do something she dislikes, points are subtracted. You don't get any points for doing something she expects. Sorry, that's the way the game is played."

"Pay attention to what she likes or doesn't like and make an effort to remember it," I read elsewhere. "Your wife should never have to tell you her preferences twice. They should be locked into your memory on first hearing."

Of course, any husband who hasn't been tuning his wife out will have long since committed such vital data to memory—and used it to frequent romantic effect.

But, if you are one of those laggards who *hasn't* been paying attention, there's no time like the present. If you don't know all her clothes sizes and her favorite cosmetics, for heaven's sakes find out. Put down the sports page and actually begin listening to that adorable creature you've been sitting across from all these years.

Then, like any attentive suitor, you can start compiling secret gift-lists—movies or CDs she's mentioned, places she'd like to go, near or far. You might even start thinking about longer-range presents and surprises, planning for her next birthday or your next anniversary. If that's too much mental strain, get a female friend to help.

But, please bear in mind, taking surreptitious mental notes to earn gift-giving points is not the main reason you are listening to her. *You listen because she's the most important person in your life.*

"Find out how she's really doing," is how one husband puts it. "Find out if there's anything you can do to make her life easier."

This is not something that comes naturally to most males. And it gets worse. That same husband counsels men to "start

sharing your own thoughts and feelings, become mentally and emotionally available to her.”

I know. Opening up to anyone, man or beast, and especially to a female, is a betrayal of rugged masculinity. Can you imagine any of the one-syllable, macho movie heroes “opening up” to their leading ladies? No, I’m not talking about Alan Alda. I mean Coop, or Duke, or Clint.⁶

So, since this seems to be such an uncomfortable topic, I’ll postpone the discussion until Chapter 6, “Daring to Be Known by Her.”

Until then, men, just listen, don’t confide yet. Believe me, your wives, when they get over the shock, will welcome the attention and the attentiveness. Don’t overdo it, and, for God’s sakes, don’t fake it. Don’t, for instance, start hanging on her every utterance with a fixed gaze and a wandering mind. Women can always tell the genuine article from a knockoff.

“It may take time for this faculty to develop,” one devoted mate cautions. “In my case I just found that more and more of my attention and interest began to be focused on my wife—what she was doing each day, on the job and at home, her thoughts and ideas and opinions. It was a kind of gradual realization that she holds the keys to my happiness.”

Another offers this simple advice: “Give your wife attention, give her adoration and give her respect. Expect nothing in return.”

Well, I’m sorry, but I draw the line at that one.

Of course, one hopes for something in return. Let’s not get carried away with selfless devotion! The knight doesn’t slay the dragon just for the fun of it. Yes, he wants to impress his lady or his queen with his manly prowess. But why? Surely Lancelot harbored an impure thought or two, reveries that involved more than impaling Guinevere’s silk scarf with his lance.

There is another reward in his mind—a Holy Grail from

which every would-be Galahad desires deeply to drink, a Grail with a very womanly shape.

So now, finally, we're back to sex.

Phase Two: Ceding Control to Her

There's another phase to Perpetual Courtship, operating at a deeper level than just buying her flowers and candy.

We're definitely talking sex now—male courtship behaviors. Think back to the way it was, in those hormone-crazed years, when you mustered your courage to ask a girl out, attempting, with hammering heart, to make the rehearsed phrases sound casual. Remember stumbling through the long obstacle course of courtship, with each barrier looming large and formidable, and with the object of your lustful affections deciding when or if it was time to move on to the next level of intimacy.

And if it *wasn't* that way for you as young man, I'm truly sorry. It was meant to be.

Ideally, and usually, the courting male is not in the power position. The female, the courtee, is. *She* decides, *she* denies, *she* confers, *she* postpones, *she* entices—maybe tonight, maybe *mañana*.

And this is the way it must be again. If you want to light up that old bonfire again.

The prescription, then, is for the husband to stop playing Lord of the Manor and go back to playing Ardent Suitor.

We're back to the Gatsbyesque quality that launched the chapter—"romantic readiness." This describes a husband who, like all romantic suitors, strives to earn or seduce ultimate favors, to divine from each word, look or gesture from the adored one whether it augurs favor or disfavor. Does she or doesn't she, will she or won't she?

Exactly the way it feels during courtship. When the woman decides if or when it will happen. And the man's readiness is

simply assumed.

It is a wonderfully workable formula, attuned to the dynamics of male and female sexuality. It guarantees maximum sexual tension and excitement—the elements for rekindling grand romantic passion.

The fatal mistake is reversing these roles after marriage, diminishing the woman's puissance in the bedroom. Robbing her of both her mystery and majesty.

So? Why not preserve the sexual dynamics of courtship?

Let him be hopeful all day long, but let the wife initiate and announce the main event ("Gentlemen, start your engines!"). Or not. Sex will be better and hotter for both—and probably more frequent.

A Treasonous Proposal?

But, a husband may sputter, isn't that a complete abdication of... of... well, of a husband's "prerogatives"?

It certainly is! It's a backward step, powerwise, from possessor to suitor. A deliberate one. But it's also a confident step. The husband is saying, "You are worthy of my best, my beloved. Let me prove myself worthy again. Let me show you my love and let you count the ways. Let me win you anew."

It's also a step that has worked wonders—in my marriage, and in so many others, to judge from hundreds and hundreds of testimonials I've come across on Internet message boards and forums, guestbooks and newsgroups. What follows is only a tiny sampling, all from husbands who freely abdicated the *droit de seigneur* and left it to their wives to initiate sex. (After, I'll include a few wifely comments about this reversion to dating dynamics.)

"This new turn in our relationship has brought the excitement and romance back," wrote one guy. "Maybe it's because I never know what my wife might allow me sexually, like when we

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

were dating. I have to work at it. I would recommend this lifestyle to any couple.”

Another husband said, “It’s like being a schoolkid in love again.”

He continued: “For me it seems very similar to the time when I was dating and in the early part of my marriage. At that time I couldn’t be sure of anything—everything was uncertain and exciting. You don’t know what future developments will occur. You want things to happen very badly but aren’t sure if or how things will develop.”

This one is more explicit: “By promising not to masturbate and to let her pleasure rule, I have lost that certainty of what will happen or when. And by being forced to wait, it seems in many ways like dating—waiting, hoping, ready and willing to attend to her wishes, but not knowing if I will get what I want or when. For me it seems to bring back a lot of that old excitement that seems to have gotten lost.”

‘Wait and Hope, Wait and Hope’⁷

“Giving my wife control of our sex life,” another husband says, “was the smartest thing I ever did. As a guy I’m always ready. Sometimes she is, sometimes she isn’t. Pressing her to join in when she wasn’t ready was always a disappointment for both of us. It can lead into a very negative cycle. When I stand ready and willing, when she’s ready it’s awesome.”

And finally, more succinctly: “The main thing is to be considerate and be ready when she is, even if you may not really be.”

Still not convinced? Then let’s hear from a few wives on the benefits of being the “initiatix”:

“Remember when his mind was filled with the thought of you and you alone (too bad this state doesn’t last forever, but that’s how the male mind works), when he jumped through hoops,

PERPETUAL COURTSHIP

brought flowers, and acted silly for you? Think back. You were in charge sexually then, whether you knew it or not.”

By simply reasserting that power, this clever wife says she found her husband reverting to all those old romantic behaviors:

“Jumping at the chance to bring me flowers, to do the household chores, to go shopping with me, and to sit and talk with me when I want him to, as long as I want him to. My husband’s life is now healthier and more family-oriented, and I love the way he makes me feel about myself as a woman.”

So, apparently, all those female-pleasing masculine behaviors don’t expire. They just lie dormant somewhere, waiting for the right trigger—as another wife discovered:

“This is going to be really good for our marriage as his attitude has done a complete turnaround. He is now a joy to be around—sweet, thoughtful, caring. I’ve never been happier!”

Or, as this woman put it, short and sweet: “*When the wife is in charge, things go well and love is in the air.*”

How about *that* for a motto to be placed over the entrance to the bedroom—or, dare I say it, the front door?

On that note, I conclude this brief discussion of perpetual courtship. However, if you turn the page, you will find a provocative postscript on the same topic. I call it “A Playful Step Beyond” and offer it with a certain hesitancy.

¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 3.

² Georges Polti, *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*.

³ *Think and Grow Rich*, Fawcett Crest paperback edition, p. 195.

⁴ See Real Women Don't Do Housework, <http://ladymisato.t35.com>.

⁵ For husbands who need help, books are available—a shelf-full from one author alone (Gregory Godek’s *Romantic Essentials: Hundreds of Ways to Show Your Love*, *1001 Ways to Be Romantic*, *10,000 Ways to Say I Love You*, *Romantic Dates*, *The Lover's Companion*, etc.).

⁶ For younger readers, “Coop.” refers to Gary Cooper, “Duke” to John Wayne, and “Clint,” of course, to Clint Eastwood.

⁷ The motto of Thomas Traddles in Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*.



A PLAYFUL STEP BEYOND

The “playful” in the title refers to “playful teasing,” one of several ways that a wife, once secure in her role as initiator of sexual activity, can take the romantic courtship phase even farther—in fact, right into the bedroom.

So far I’ve been talking to husbands, offering things they can do to “turn marriage back into passionate courtship.” Even the last chapter was couched in terms of the husband “letting” his wife initiate sex by “ceding control” to her in order to recreate the dynamics of courtship.

But the suggestions that follow *cannot* be implemented by the husband. They require the wife’s complicity, indeed, her supervision.

So what follows is addressed both to husband and wife. My hope is that, by now, she is reading along, having been shown the book (perhaps after demanding to know the reasons for her husband’s sudden romantic transformation).

The techniques for bringing courtship into the bedroom, and into bed, are *rationing* and *teasing*. They are intended to be playful, not kinky. Rationing, for instance, does not equate to denial

of sex, merely postponing—the wife keeping her mate in a state of erotic suspense in order to enhance their mutual pleasure.

If that's kinky, so is heavy petting, because that's what it amounts to. It's ritual courtship behavior, the mating dance performed endlessly and variously by all God's creatures to ensure male fascination with the female and his optimum performance.

Do Do That Voodoo

Many wives take to this step with relish—those who are not averse to being manipulative (figuratively and literally). To quote Fumika Misato's advice to wives, "To wield erotic power you must overcome your own inhibitions to being manipulative."¹

Others may object on principle. When first exposed to some of Misato's techniques (which are more involved and extensive than anything mentioned here), one woman's response was categorical: "I don't approve." Specifically, she didn't approve of using sex in any way that could be construed as controlling her husband. Sex, she felt, was intended as a gift of love, not a power trip.

How can one argue with that? This is an entirely understandable and loving response.

But what if a husband *desires* to be "manipulated"—in a playful way? Wouldn't a wife, in so doing, be conferring a gift of love? What if, in order to foster the climate of romantic eroticism, he *needs* to be manipulated? What if the result is a marriage quickened with a return to the feverish dynamics of impassioned courtship?

Just a nudge, gentle wives. But let me add, for any willing to give these ideas a playful spin, such romantic outcomes are not exceptional; they are the rule.

"Every woman I know who has succeeded in taking charge of her man's orgasms has been overjoyed with the results," one

well-pleased woman wrote. "Their men become more interested in them, more affectionate, physically and mentally, more polite and generous, more helpful, better lovers and even sexier!"

Courtship in Milady's Bedchamber

The underlying point is, even when a couple goes to bed, courtship continues. The husband does not become conqueror; he remains suitor. Under these playful new rules, "making love" retains its older, courtly connotations. Bringing her pleasure becomes his primary focus—and his only sure reward. What favors will she grant him? He does not know. He advances eagerly as far as she permits, no farther.

All here is at her whim. She may, she may not. She may wish him to please her again, while she meditates upon his fate. Her authority in this arena is not questioned. A game isn't really a game if the outcome is foreknown.

Again, sex is not denied the husband, merely rationed. The wife controls the frequency of his ejaculations, guided by experience and experimentation, in order to maintain him in a healthy state of desire.² Misato refers to this wifely art as "keeping him on the edge"—too frequent, and he may become sated and lose interest; too seldom, and he may become frustrated and rebellious.

The rationing is not an exercise of perverse power, but of practicality. "I recommend that you place your husband on some kind of sexual diet," one wife explains, "so that his appetite for the goodies will peak and keep him wanting more. Use and enjoy this power—for your benefit and his."

The unknowable outcome plays with the husband's mind, increasing his excitement. Meanwhile, erotic teasing by his wife—teasing that need not be confined to the bedroom—also works to his advantage. He experiences an increase in sexual excitement, and with an intensity he has probably not known since adoles-

cence. Only his game-ending climaxes are reduced.

"My wife likes to kiss me, hug me, get me all excited, then send me off to work," a husband writes. "Her feelings and thoughts and touches remain on my mind all day long, and I just can't wait for the day to end so I can see her. Therefore, when we finally have sex at her choosing, it is such an exciting time for me."

Clearly, this is a table-turning on the husband, making it impossible for him to take his solitary pleasure and roll over, leaving the wife adrift. But this reversal of sexual dynamics is not designed as payback, or to fit any feminist agenda. It is prescribed because it works to the erotic advantage of *both* partners.

Yes, it makes darned sure the wife gets her pleasure first. But it also extends and intensifies the husband's pleasure, saving him from a quick release followed by an even quicker loss of desire—climax and anti-climax:

"It passed like a sudden hurtling-down,"³ one writer describes this all-too-familiar phenomenon. How much fun is that?

"The male orgasm," writes a woman psychologist who advocates what she calls "Loving Female Authority," "is merely a quick stress reliever that leads to a loss in energy and a letdown in mental fulfillment."⁴

"Save yourself for her direction," a happy husband advises. "Your satisfaction will be intensified."

Suggests another: "Relinquishing total control to a loving trusted spouse provides a base thrill. Not the thrill of taking your hands off of the steering wheel while going 75 mph, but a thrill nonetheless."

"During our youth and courtship we 'made out' constantly," a husband recalls, "but we didn't have the opportunity, because of time or place, to experience orgasm. Or we hadn't reached that stage yet. And that created a very wonderful and exciting sexual tension."

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

A sexual tension that far exceeds the short-lived male orgasm in excitement and intensity.

Male sexuality has one goal in mind—achieving orgasm. The instant that goal is achieved, the male basically loses all interest in sex until his reservoirs are refilled. The only way the male can prolong his sexual pleasure at one particular session is by postponing orgasm.

But how can he do that with the biological imperative in full control and millions of sperm strapped in below, waiting for kamikaze launch? That's asking a bit much.

Of course, there's apparently Tantric yoga, whose male practitioners purportedly acquire such glandular mastery that they are transformed into non-ejaculatory love machines.

But I think we've just left the world of romance, and entered the sexual Olympics. Besides, there is a simpler way: letting the wife control her partner's orgasms.

The Manly Art of Womanly Control

"Orgasm has been described as losing control," one thoughtful husband wrote. "Giving up control to your wife is like having a sexual encounter that lasts hours or days."

Another husband, who is regularly teased and rationed, admitted that, "It is a very erotic experience for me. Even at work she is constantly on my mind."

And wives, even those initially skeptical about the program, often find they enjoy the playful control—and the teasing of their men. But, as mentioned, there are additional payoffs:

"Ever just want to talk, take him shopping with you, take quiet walks together, share special moments, or just hold hands?" a wife asks. "Now you will have the tools to make it happen. You control his sexual release and his fantasies; what else has he got to do? How about a good, old-fashioned necking session on the couch like when you were teenagers? Kissing

A PLAYFUL STEP BEYOND

games? The list is limited only by your imagination. You may achieve release anytime by his oral or manual attentions. His release is at your whim and mercy. It may be as frequent or infrequent as you desire.”

A recipe for husbandly frustration? “This form of control does deepen the need and instill dependency,” one man admits. But, he adds, he and his wife both revel in the heightened state of desire thus created:

“My wife plays me like a fiddle. But don’t get me wrong. I’m not protesting, I’m bragging. I’m right where I want to be, in her clutches, and wouldn’t trade places with any man on earth. I’ve discovered that the joy of constant arousal far outweighs the momentary experience of ejaculation.”

Another agreed: “I’ve been living a continuous emotional orgasm that far exceeds the brief sexual tide I experience when I’m allowed a physical orgasm.”

Comments another “teased-and-rationed” husband, “I have not felt like this since I was a teenager, and was teased by either the conscious manipulation of the girls I dated or the inconvenient circumstances of teenage love. In any event I am confident that the intensity I feel now for my wife can last a lifetime.”

And another: “Yes, my wife teases me endlessly, yes, she keeps me wondering when it’s going to happen, yes, she has me by the balls—often literally, since that is one of the many ways she has of teasing me. As a result, I can’t help thinking about her all the time. And I love it!”

This man’s wife offered her own perspective: “Men don’t like to admit it, but they secretly crave our power, and actually thrive on it. They become better, more productive, nicer people. It’s society that says men should be in charge in the bedroom and control women. But reality says otherwise.”

An enthusiastic amen is offered by this sexually empowered wife: “I am in charge of lovemaking. I decide when we do it,

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

how we do it, whether he can penetrate me and whether he can bring himself to a climax. This might sound very controlling to you, but in fact my husband says it has given him an aroused state of being for hours or even days rather than the old regulation ten minutes. And I am certainly enjoying it!”

One Internet couples counselor calling herself simply “Dr. Ann” described the mutual benefits this way:

“When my female clients add the uncertainty principle of arousal and denial to their marriage, a woman can bring her husband back to the days when they were first dating. These techniques instill uncertainty in the husband as to whether he will be allowed to complete a sex act with her or not. Husbands become more focused on their wives and no longer suffer the frustrating feelings caused by a desire for unattainable women.”⁵

‘No’ Means ‘No’—But Maybe Tomorrow

One husband was expected to orally pleasure his wife on a nightly basis—and was delighted with the assignment: “There’s nowhere I’d rather be.” But his nightly ministrations did not necessarily equate to climax for himself. His wife liked keeping him on the edge—several nights running, sometimes a week or longer.

Did he feel victimized, reduced in manly stature? No, he felt like the “luckiest stiff” he knew, and wrote that his wife had become “like a goddess” to him.⁶ He rationalized it thus:

“We guys should learn to take ‘no’ for an answer from our wives. Don’t pout about it. Cuddle with her, adore her, worship her, satisfy her, and accept her control over your sexual release. And then, when she does decide to make it happen for you, believe me, it’ll blow your mind!”

¹ “Real Women Don’t Do Housework,” <http://ladymisato.t35.com>. Besides, as discussed in Chapter One, *without* female manipulation of male sexuality, civiliza-

tion as we know it would not exist! (George Gilder: "Women manipulate male sexual desire in order to teach men the long-term cycles of female sexuality and biology on which civilization is based."—*Men and Marriage*, Pelican Publishing Co., 1992. p. 13.)

² Of course, like any practice, this "playful step" can be taken to unhealthy extremes (e.g., husbands being kept locked in chastity devices for extended periods, or systematically stimulated and denied). This has nothing to do with hyper-romantic sex or wife-worship.

³ *L'Enfer* by Henri Barbusse (1874-1935), quoted in Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1956), p. 11.

⁴ Elise Sutton's "Loving Female Authority," <http://www.elisesutton.com>.

⁵ "Loving Female Authority," <http://www.elisesutton.com>.

⁶ This husband's reaction is quite typical, according to psychologist Sutton: "A man who performs oral servitude on a woman and is denied an orgasm will experience far greater and longer mental pleasure and fulfillment than if he had an orgasm. There is something hypnotic and almost spiritual that occurs when a man pleasures a woman without expecting an orgasm in return. The taste, smell and aroma of the female can be intoxicating and the feeling of love and nurturing that will flood a man's soul can be euphoric."

PAMPERING AND PITCHING IN

"I tell you, the way she used him was wicked. She had him waiting on her hand and foot."

—female character in John D. MacDonald mystery.¹

"Housework's the hardest work in the world. That's why men won't do it."

—Edna Ferber²

Is it unmanly to pamper your wife? Is it insulting to a woman, or infantilizing, to open doors for her when she's perfectly capable herself? Should a husband stick to gender-specific chores—washing the car, raking leaves, pounding nails, hauling garbage?

The courtship model makes quick work of these debates: You can't do enough for her! "Waiting on her hand and foot" is, in fact, a turn-on to lovestruck suitors—and lovestruck husbands. Testimony on this is eye-opening, to say the least. Macho guys giving pedicures?

Absolutely! "My wife accused me of having a foot fetish," said one, "but I told her no, I have a wife fetish."

"At first I didn't know what I was doing," said another, "but in time I got to be damn good at it. Her feet looked like a professional had done them. And for the guys who say, 'Oh, that must have been hell'—Wrong! I was in complete heaven."

A less challenging pampering project is the bedtime foot rub. Or back rub. With the slightest wifely encouragement, these can easily segue into full body massage and who knows what-all.

"Pampering," obviously, is ripe with erotic possibilities.

Which is why we'll leave it for dessert and instead begin with the vegetable course—the other half of this chapter, namely "Pitching In."

'Irons and Diapers and Brooms, Oh My!'

"Pitching in" is an issue easily framed in terms of equity. In today's two-income marriages, ought the woman be expected to tie on an apron the minute she parks her briefcase at the front door?

Of course not. Yet, typically, that is what happens.

Shouldn't the husband voluntarily turn off the Big Game du Jour and lend a hand?

Of course he should. Why not let his work-weary wife log a few hours of her own in the La-Z-Boy with a magazine and a Merlot?

"It's time husbands did more than take out the garbage," declares home-cleaning author Jeff Campbell. His books and website³ promote a system called "Speed Cleaning," where husbands and wives team up on housework. "It's still hard to get husbands to participate," Campbell notes. "That makes it doubly hard for women to keep their homes clean."

Australian feminist writer Susan Maushart⁴ goes farther. In the English-speaking world, Maushart writes, wives—whether employed or unemployed—perform 70 to 80 percent of the unpaid labor within families. She adds: "Wives also contribute 100

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

percent of the husband care—the myriad tasks of physical and emotional nurture that I call ‘wifework.’”

“I love my man, I really do,” one English housewife told Ms. Maushart, “but if only he would pick up the sodding Hoover!”

No surprise, then, that Fumika Misato calls her wife-empowering website (with tongue only partially in cheek), “Real Women Don’t Do Housework.”⁵

So, romance aside, in the interests of simple fairness, husbands ought to haul themselves off their couches en masse, relinquish their remotes and take up their honey-do lists.

Agreed? All right. In that context, the “what’s-in-it-for-me” questions can be addressed: What does “pitching in” have to do with a return to courtship rituals? And is there likely to be an erotic payoff?

You’d be surprised.

Ask any man, goes a joke I heard somewhere, and he’ll tell you a woman’s ultimate fantasy is to have two men at once. While this has been verified by a recent sociological study, it appears that most men do not realize that, in this fantasy, one man is cooking and the other is cleaning.

On an Internet survey one hard-working careerwoman described her ideal mate as “Betty Crocker, Martha Stewart and Suzy Homemaker packaged into a tall, dark, studly, handsome frame.”

Another put it even more plainly: “What I really need is a wife.”

A husband can step up to the plate (as it were) and be that that helpmeet without endangering his masculinity (even if he dons an occasional apron). By doing so, in fact, he will be more a man in her eyes. Yea, verily, he may assume the radiant and transfigured status of champion—*her* champion.

And, yes, it may pay erotic dividends down the road.

Domestic Dragon-Slaying

“Gone are the days when my husband just plops in front of the TV after work,” a wife writes of her reformed couch potato. “Now he actually looks for opportunities to do household chores, volunteers to go shopping with me and helps me with carrying the purchases. All of this does wonders for my self-image, and allows me to feel, dress and act sexier, which in turn fuels his lust.”

Another wife writes: “Once or twice a week my husband goes around the apartment and quietly scoops up all of the crusty, knotted No-Nonsense and Hanes Ultra Sheer, rinses them in the bathroom sink with cold water and a little Woollite, and hangs them up to drip-dry. When I asked him once—feeling slightly embarrassed—why he was doing this, he replied, ‘I like to do things for you.’ Even after three and a half years, I’m still not accustomed to this sort of four-star treatment.”

“My sweetie enhances my happiness and well-being in so many ways now,” another wife boasts. “This includes doing dishes, or any other housework that he sees needs doing, so I don’t have to—and without my asking him to. And I love him for it!”

Get the picture? The husband is on hands and knees, scrubbing the Spanish tile or removing play-dough from the broadloom, and the wife’s heart is going pitter-pat. Not because of his exposed butt-crack. It’s because he’s helping! The big galoot is finally pitching in against the domestic dragons she’s been battling singlehandedly—ever since the honeymoon. And probably during.

These are not atypical wifely reactions. The formula is nearly foolproof. If a husband sets out to make his mate’s life easier by taking on everyday chores, he will have a very pleased and contented mate—after she gets over the initial shock.

It’s even been validated by science: Men who do more house-

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

work and child care have better sex lives and happier marriages than do unhelpful husbands, according to marital researcher Dr. John Gottman.⁶

But do we really need a research study to confirm that “being the sole person in a marriage to clean the toilet and scrub the floors is definitely not an aphrodisiac”?⁷

Another old joke: “What’s the sexiest thing a young dad can do for his wife?” Answer: “The dishes.”⁸

But aren’t there more traditional, macho ways to win her heart?

Maybe. If you live in a jungle, with real predators roaming the back yard, forget the dustmop, grab the nearest lethal weapon and go out there and protect your bride. She’ll love you for it. Or, if you bring home enough bacon from the competitive jungle, you could hire a large household staff and decree that your princess bride never lift a finger.

In most neighborhoods and at most income levels, however, you’ll accumulate more hero points converting “wifework” into “husbandwork.” Just start “picking up”—messes, dry-cleaning, the kids after school, or after yourself. Or pick up on one of the thousand routine tasks she does every day to make a home—and do it yourself.

Wake Up and Smell the Clorox

Problem: Most men don’t really know what those thousand tasks are. They’ve worked hard, since their swaggering diaper days, to *keep* from knowing. As one fictional detective puts it, “It scares me to see the way single guys live.”⁹

But men can learn. Well, maybe not *all* men. Maybe not bachelors who use empty pizza boxes as room dividers. But there’s hope for well-motivated married men. If that’s you, don’t wait for further inspiration. Check out a book, do a Web search (Google or Ask.com) on “how to clean a bathroom” or “iron a

shirt.” Or ask your wife to show you. Start following her around, watch what she does and how she does it.

Then go thou and do likewise.

You can even try to do it better, if you’re motivated by competition. Think of it as a new hobby, like golf or fly-fishing. Turn it into a macho mania, become a fanatic Mr. Kleen. Show your wife how you can field-strip and degunk a stove in record time, standing proudly at attention as she performs the white-glove test.

And He Can Cook, Too!

Cooking seems to be one domestic duty many husbands actually enjoy. Not just searing steaks on the barbie, mind you, but the whole nine yards—meal-planning, preparing, serving (and cleanup). If you already wear the family chef cap, bravo! If you don’t cook, however, you should start. Being rescued from the kitchen ranks high on the wish-list of many a domestically distressed damsel.

Take a cooking course. Get a cookbook. Ask for her help. As with other domestic befuddlements, you get points for trying, as long as you persevere and make incremental improvements.

How about cooking her favorite meal, then serving it... with flowers... by candlelight? If so, *voilà!* You’re into the enchanted realm of courtship cuisine:

Having dinner waiting when she gets home. Handing her a glass of wine. Serving and waiting on her. Refilling her glass. Creating a romantic ambiance with candlelight and soft music. Listening to her, connecting with her. Then, after dinner, allowing her to relax while you tidy up.

See what’s happening? “Pitching in”—shopping, cooking, scrubbing pots—has morphed into “pampering”—serving her in style and letting her luxuriate.

That’s because pampering and pitching in are a continuum,

complementary phases of courtship. Wives seem quite clear on this—for example, this respondent to an Internet survey: “My dream husband would do all the laundry, keep the house clean, drive the kids all over, cook, and at night would pamper me.”

The Manly Art of Pampering

“I love to do everything I can to make her life better and she enjoys these perks,” writes a dutiful convert to this lifestyle. “Cooking, cleaning and all that, or backrubs, full-body massages, opening doors, brushing her hair (which feels so good)—the list is way too long of things one can do, and each and every item is an act of love.”

“The more you do, the more you *want* to do,” says another, “and the more you *want* to do, the more you discover things you *can* do. It just grows.”

According to a tabloid report, Dr. Phillip McGraw, the popular TV psychologist known as “Dr. Phil,” caters to his wife’s “most intimate desires.” “He loves to run a hot bubble bath for her,” a family friend is quoted as saying, “and while she’s bathing, he recites poems and sings songs that he’s written for her.”¹⁰

Does this seem a mite excessive, guys? But what about the after-work dither you get into (at least I hope you get into) every Valentine’s day, rushing to the florist, the candy store, the Hall-mark shop? The goal here is to make every day Valentine’s.

“I told her that when I got home I’d cook her supper,” a husband says. “So I’ve been doing it ever since and have really started to enjoy my marriage for the first time ever.”

“I now take breakfast up to her every morning in bed,” writes another, “and I’m doing a lot more housework, cooking for her every night, and I have never been this happy, not ever, and I mean not ever.”

Note, these husbands aren’t talking about sex, per se, but a kind of pervasive, connubial euphoria. This is not the way hus-

bands usually feel about marriage. Romantic euphoria *is*, however, the characteristic condition of courtship:

*All at once am I / Several stories high.
Knowing I'm on the street where you live.*¹¹

No wonder these men get a kick out of doing things for their wives. They're "high" on love, performing heroic deeds for their lady fair:

"I'm always looking for ways to surprise her, from bringing home flowers or little gifts, to straightening up or polishing her shoes, or taking her out to a play and dinner."

"I simply love taking care of my wife and doing all I can to please and tend to her. It seems so natural."

"You know, I really feel sorry for men who don't spend at least some of their time doing personal pleasure chores for their wife."

Maybe the simplest answer to "why" such giddy behavior has already been supplied (in the chapter on "Perpetual Courtship"): "Man's greatest motivating force is his desire to please woman!"¹²

Cautionary Notes

Awhile back I suggested turning household chores into a competitive pastime. But I'm having second thoughts. Speed and efficiency are useful, and striving for excellence in any pursuit is admirable. Just remember, you're there to make her life easier, not to drive her to distraction with compulsive tidiness. I recall a Type A executive who, the day after his retirement, began reorganizing his wife's kitchen cupboards till she couldn't find anything. You don't need to color code her recipes, re-sort the pantry shelves by alphabetical item or barcode, or rotate all soup cans label-out. (Unless she asks, of course.)

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

Just be helpful.

And don't be a one-day wonder. Don't do thirty things you never did before on the first day, a typhoon of efficiency, then slack off next day. Better to do one thing and keep on doing it. Add things one at a time, if you like. If you want to impress her, let her count on you.

This applies also to romantic gestures and courtesies. Be Prince Charming, but don't make your Cinderella's grand ball a one-night stand. You want her happiness to last ever-after. You don't ever want her to go back to the scullery.

Lair of the She-Creature

Bedroom, bath, boudoir. These Three Bs can be intimidating, even a little scary. Left to their own proclivities, men dwell in cave-like dens, "estrogen-free zones," surrounded by toys, trophies and accumulated crud. Like the Seven Dwarfs before Snow White's home invasion. No meddlesome female to make them wipe their filthy boots or wash their horny hands.

And yet...

Why do men choose to live on intimate terms with the female of the species? Of course, some men don't. But the overwhelming majority do. Most of us prefer to be the only male in the domestic equation. We deliberately pair off with a creature whose cupolas and concavities and household notions are radically, delightfully, unlike our own. Creatures who cover toilet lids with crochet and fit bedskirts around boxsprings.

Why do we put up with this? Why do we crave it?

The question fascinates. The opposite sex, what does it mean—especially in terms of Woman? Is she the primordial "other half" Socrates spoke of,¹³ making our romantic quest a literal longing for "fulfillment"? Or are women "the Other" posited by some existentialists and philosophers and psychologists, providing us a constant and delightful friction, on every level?

Are they our polar “opposites,” as in electromagnetism, whose attraction overpowers us on an atomic level? Or are we drawn to them, biologically, as the literal matrix of masculinity, from which we emerged?

Whatever the rationale, the cosmic puzzle pieces were clearly designed to fit together this way.

So, don’t fight it, don’t try to solve it. Just plunge in!

Behind Closed Doors

Many wives prefer complete privacy in bath and boudoir. If that’s the case, the loving husband can await her pleasure without.

Other wives, however, may leave the door slightly ajar and allow their amorous consorts occasional access through the steamy vapors and perfumed mists. For what purposes, you may wonder.

Well, there are manly guys who draw their wife’s bath. Who shampoo her hair. Who loofah her skin and even shave her legs. Who give facials while she luxuriates in the suds. And who are ready with a warmed, fluffed towel to enfold her as she emerges, a dripping Venus, from the bath. Who are rewarded with the further privilege of drying and powder-puffing her skin, or massaging it with moisturizing creams. And who, later, lovingly brush her hair, the traditional hundred strokes.

*“...nice work if you can get it,
And if you get it, won’t you tell me how?”¹⁴*

For these fortunate husbands, all of the above constitutes a kind of prolonged foreplay, whether or not it leads to actual sex. But let them tell their stories:

“Pampering, loving, pleasing her in any way possible, is my favorite way to act.”

"Let her feel your adoration."

"She lets me cater to her every whim and I love it!"

"Through pampering my wife I am brought close to the center of the feminine mystery, intoxicated by it, overwhelmed by her."

"A wave of profound happiness rises in me when I worship my Goddess wife. It is heaven for me."

Feminine Mystery

That's what pampering is all about. It is worshipping your wife—her body, her feelings, her presence, her—well, all of her.

"Men are fascinated with a woman's body. They want to be a part of it and to understand it. Often sex is a type of adoration and respect for woman... He longs for her to teach him about the great mystery of woman."¹⁵

Robert Louis Stevenson writes of a young male character "transferred to the feminine department, where his life was little short of heavenly... an enchanted isle among the storms of life."¹⁶

And, as I wrote on my website, "Worshipping Your Wife is not about literal worship (goddess or otherwise), idolatry or anything even remotely sacrilegious. It is about respecting and honoring, revering and protecting, adoring and cherishing."¹⁷

We're speaking poetically—the hyperbolic language of lovestruck suitors. It is through this rose-colored prism we view the creatures we love. "All women are goddesses," screen goddess Nicole Kidman decreed, "even when they're in the kitchen making pancakes for their kids. Boyfriends need to understand that if women are worshiped, the world will be a better place."¹⁸

"When my son started dating," super-agent Judith Regan is quoted as saying, "I told him the bottom line is to treat a woman with respect, put her on a pedestal and worship the ground she walks on."¹⁹

"Adore her by your actions and your words," is how one wor-

shipful husband sums it up. "Never miss a chance to tell her how beautiful she is, how smart she is and how much you cherish her. When you are in public, let your adoration spill over. Treat her like a lady at all times. Open doors for her, stand when she enters a room, don't interrupt her and be quick to tell everyone, anyone, how special she is."

From Suitor to Sycophant?

Are we getting slightly carried away? Advocating a kind of chivalrous silliness—opening doors and standing when she enters a room? Traditional feminists routinely label such masculine behavior as infantilizing, even insulting. And many husbands express contempt for men who behave as does this one:

"It is fun to express my adoration for my wife in the community. I open the car door for her always now. That raises a few eyebrows!"

It's a tricky call. One husband's silliness may be another's devotion. Courty gestures between husband and wife may well raise eyebrows, but that is not necessarily a bad or a bizarre thing. What kind of man never opened a door for his beloved, or never longed to? By-standing wives may be rendered envious, husbands uncomfortable, realizing what has been lost along the marital way. Or they may be inspired.

Risking Ridicule

"Catering" to one's wife in public may entail social risk and require a bit of bravery. But for those pioneers willing to take the arrows, it also offers a unique opportunity—the chance to join the vanguard of a new cause, the openly adoring and supportive husband.

Like this one: "Far from being ashamed of all the things I do for her around the house, and in the bedroom and boudoir, my greatest joy and fulfillment is to serve her with all the adoration

and respect that she deserves.”

Interestingly, there is an entire category of husband who must deal with this issue today—those who support their wives’ careers. Whether they work full time, part time or all the time as househusbands, these guys typically earn significantly less than do their breadwinning wives. Whatever the degree of role-reversal in their marriages, these husbands—variously labeled “corporate” or “trailing” spouses—assume many traditional wifely obligations—e.g., playing supportive spouse at corporate functions. The job demands of the “leading spouse” determine their daily schedules, their weekends and vacations, where they must live or relocate.

It can be a difficult transition, coping with such fundamental changes. Support groups have been cropping up on the Internet²⁰ to help corporate spouses and househusbands with role and identity issues. Browsing through these newsgroups and bulletin boards, one learns that some husbands evolved into supporting roles as a result of the vicissitudes of the job market. Others seem to have adopted it as a kind of prenuptial agreement, often between young collegians where the young woman’s career prospects took clear precedence over her fiancé’s.

Being There for Her

Can this kind of non-traditional marriage arrangement work? Without unearthing statistics, I would hazard to say that, as with any couple, the chances for success increase where the husband adopts a worshipful attitude toward his wife. Having the woman in the power position, after all, recreates the dynamics of courtship, where she is pursued and pampered on a daily basis. The adoring husband will not merely cope with his new role, but embrace it. By assuming a greater percentage of domestic duties, he is given maximum opportunity for romantic endeavor.

There’s abundant testimony to that effect from corporate

spouses and househusbands:

"I'm going to go and draw my wife a nice, long hot bath with rosehip and sandalwood oil. She's spent all evening at the office and is waiting for my attention. I would rather listen to her day over sparkling wine than almost anything else in God's world."

Another: "Though it made sense financially and in every way, I wasn't really sure about doing it, but I wanted to give it a try. It took me only a few months to realize how much I enjoyed being her househusband. I was able to keep the house cleaner than it had ever been, keep her clothes clean and pressed, have her meals ready on time, run her errands and a host of other duties and still had time for a round of golf now and then."

"I enjoy waiting on her hand and foot," another wrote, "and I also enjoy using my creative mind to serve her in new ways."

The tribe of male corporate spouses seems sure to increase, by all indicators. Young women now dramatically outnumber men as undergraduates and graduates, with the inevitable result of increasing numbers of women in professional and corporate ranks: "Men's enrollment in higher education has declined since 1992. Males now make up just 44 percent of undergraduate students nationwide. And federal projections show their share shrinking to as little as 42 percent by 2010."²¹

The trend is dramatic,²² and, as it applies to young males, worrisome. As one Canadian business writer speculates, "One wonders where these future high-profile women will find their mate, in a society where well-off, educated men will be a smaller minority than they are today. Will female doctors and corporate lawyers happily settle down with male nurses and mall clerks?"²³

It may be time guidance counselors steered adolescent males into home-econ classes. In any case, over time, as more husbands accept subordinate roles, the social stigma ought to be blunted, if not removed. As one young househusband declares:

"Is it humiliating to support your wife's career? I hope not. I expect to be doing it for fifty plus years."

A Final Worshipful Word

All wives need adoring support, of course, whether upwardly mobile or domestically devoted, or both. Listen to the passionate eloquence of yet another worshipful husband, as he makes the case for "pitching in and pampering":

"I actually feel privileged to do things for her. Many guys only dream of being in deeply romantic relationships, while sitting at home alone, night after night. I have the opportunity to please my goddess wife that most men would die for!"

And this final ode to domestic joy: "I feel uplifted by the mundane acts of service to my wife. They infuse the chores and demands of my routine life with a meaning they never had before. It's my small service to divinity in the flesh."

Amen to that!

¹ John D. MacDonald's *Bright Orange for the Shroud* (Fawcett Books).

² Said by a character in Edna Ferber's *So Big*.

³ Jeff Campbell's *The Clean Team*, <http://www.jeffcampbell.com>.

⁴ Susan Maushart: *Wifework: What Marriage Really Means for Women* (Text Publishing, 2001).

⁵ "Real Women Don't Do Housework," <http://ladymisato.t35.com>.

⁶ Research findings published by John Gottman, Ph.D. in the May/June 1994 issue of the *Family Therapy Networker*.

⁷ Linda S. Mintle, Ph.D.: "Men Who Do Housework Have Happier Marriages," on "Dr. Linda Helps," on Christianity. Com (<http://www.christianity.com>).

⁸ From a marital survey published in *Reader's Digest*, February, 2003, p. 69.

⁹ Scott Turow, *Pleading Guilty* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

¹⁰ "Inside Dr. Phil's Marriage," *National Enquirer*, July 15, 2003.

¹¹ From Alan Jay Lerner's "On the Street Where You Live," *My Fair Lady*.

¹² Napoleon Hill in *Think and Grow Rich*.

¹³ In Plato's *Symposium*.

¹⁴ Ira Gershwin, "Nice Work If You Can Get It."

¹⁵ "Is 'Wife Worship' Code for a 'Femdom' Marriage?"

<http://wifeworship.tripod.com/femdom.htm>.

¹⁶ Robert Louis Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* ("Story of the Bandbox").

¹⁷ "Is 'Wife Worship' Code for a 'Femdom' Marriage?"

<http://wifeworship.tripod.com/femdom.htm>

¹⁸ Quoted in *New York Daily News*, April 30, 2003.

¹⁹ Quoted on the "Women's Wire" website, <http://www.women.com>.

²⁰ A few examples: Spouses Trailing Under Duress Successfully, <http://www.studsoflondon.com>; Association of Househusbands <http://www.uominicasalinghi.it/index.asp>; At Home Dad, <http://www.angelfire.com/zine2/athomedad/index.blog>; Trailing Spouses, <http://trailing-spouses.blogspot.com>.

²¹ "The Male Minority," *Time Magazine*, Saturday, Dec. 2, 2000.

²² Also see: "Look Who's Bringing Home More Bacon," *Business Week*, January 27, 2003; "Women Rising in Corporate Ranks," *Washington Post*, November 19, 2002; "Why Women Should Rule the World," *Fortune*, October 28, 2002; "Most Powerful Women in Business: Trophy Husbands," *Fortune*, September 27, 2002; "Women Dominating Medical Schools," BBC News, July 3, 2002; "Look Who's Barefoot in the Kitchen," *Businessweek Online*, September 17, 2001.

²³ "Here's a Shock for Women," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, October 14, 2002.



DARING TO BE KNOWN BY HER

When asked how she and husband Steve Lawrence had stayed together so long, singer Eydie Gorme once gave the following advice:

"Always keep it light, never talk about anything serious!"

For couples who don't sing love duets, this is not a recipe for long-term marital bliss. But it does touch a nerve: Most men aren't comfortable discussing intimate or emotional issues—including sexual fantasies. According to radio talk show host and syndicated columnist Dennis Prager, "When it comes to men's specific desires, they are usually too embarrassed or afraid to say."¹

Is it really necessary for husbands to leave their non-verbal comfort zone? Why can't the wives watch *Oprah!* and gush over touchy-feely issues while husbands watch the "game" and communicate through monosyllables and simple gestures?

The non-verbal status quo is fine—unless the husband wants to rekindle the fires of romance, which, of course, is what I heartily advocate. So my advice to husbands is: Find the "Power Off" button on the remote, get off the couch and start courting

your wife. Which, for starters, means talking and listening to her. Courtship is an exciting zone for the male animal, but, at least for husbands, it is not a comfort zone.

That's okay. The path of least resistance is not always the best way to go. In fact, the path of *greatest* resistance is more likely the best way. This was codified by mystery novelist John D. MacDonald into Meyer's Law: "In all emotional conflicts, the thing you find hardest to do is the thing you *should* do."² So, if you find "inter-spousal communication" difficult, take it as a reliable indicator that you're on the right path.

But maybe it wasn't always so difficult. Guys, think back to your dating days. Perhaps you've forgotten how much, in those first, feverish encounters, conversation fueled romance. Yes, primitive signals, body language and other forms of nonverbal communication do make up a significant part of the mating dance. But words are still required to make the emotional connection, to elevate the he-she encounter to the realm of romance. Even whales, apparently, croon love songs.

When Silence *Isn't* Golden

Eloquence is especially required when indifference has drifted you and your spouse apart. Passionate speech is called for to begin bridging that kind of emotional gulf. It's okay to take your bride for richer or for poorer, but not to take her for granted.

This is not easy for most men. That is why I made this Step Six. *After* the reawakening suitor has realized he wants to get back the thrill, committed himself to save his sex energies for his wife, to make her his fantasy, to court her every day, attempt to win her anew, and to pamper her and pitch in around the house.

The good news is, with marriage returning to the pulse-quickenning courtship model, there should be plenty to talk about. The more a husband's thoughts—and fantasies—turn to his wife

during the day, the more he will have to share with her at night (or other private times).

Warning: You Are Entering a Touchy-Feely Zone

Okay, I admit it. This sounds dangerously like daytime-TV shrink talk, or the headline teasers on all those supermarket-checkout magazine covers: “Take Our Relationship Quiz,” “Five Things He Won’t Tell You (But Wishes You Knew),” *yadda yadda yadda*. Fumika Misato calls her website on empowering wives, “Real Women Don’t Do Housework.” Well, let me spin that: Real Men Don’t Do Relationship Talk—and they tend to suspect the masculinity of men who *do* (unless, like Dr. Phil, they can do it with a bit of swagger).

I used to be of the Steve-and-Eydie, “keep it light” school. Whenever my wife suggested we talk about “us,” or anything that threatened emotional intimacy, I got that deer-in-the-headlights look. A lot of guys, I think, have a phobia in regard to this treacherous conversational terrain. One step and we’re up to our ears in emotional quicksand, with no escape.

But emotional eloquence isn’t called for here. Or even articulateness. Passion is what is needed, and passion carries its own eloquence. When I rediscovered the glorious creature who by some miracle had married me, there were suddenly lots of things I wanted to tell her—simple things, even trite things.

Three Little Words and a Zillion Variations

So lay it out there, tell her how much you desire her. If articulation falters, stammer it out. In fact, too much eloquence may arouse suspicion, while inarticulate passion is famously persuasive. “Speak for yourself, John Alden,” remains good advice for the tongue-tied suitor. Never hire a wordsmith to plight your troth. And don’t worry if your awkward avowal lacks originality, or tends toward Hallmarkian sentiment. True love may be trite,

but it's never out of date, even after a zillion song lyrics.

Some husbands find it easier to communicate their amorous feelings electronically than face-to-face. "I often express my love to her through emails and instant messaging," confesses one, "writing and sending little daily love notes."

That'll work.

If it doesn't, never fear. There's an even easier way to start the communication cycle—easier than stammering out your lust. Start by letting her talk to you.

Communication 101: You Are Not Alone

I seldom initiate any form of communication with my friends or family members—a gender *and* character flaw. My wife, on the other hand, keeps in regular touch with the people who mean the most to her, friends and family. I read somewhere that most men require only about an hour of conversation each week, while women typically require fifteen hours.

So why not become one of those people *your* wife communicates with on a regular basis?

The trick is, you have to actually listen to her. You can't wander off or tune out when she starts talking. You have to give her your undivided attention (not a factory-equipped feature available on most males, so you'll have to work at it).

One husband writes: "I find that listening attentively to her made the biggest change in our relationship." Who would have thunk it?

"Talking releases a rush of dopamine and oxycotin (the 'reward' and 'bonding' neurochemicals) in a woman's brain," explains Louann Brizendine, M.D., author of *The Female Brain* and a neuropsychiatrist at the University of California at San Francisco. "It's the biggest neurological reward a woman can get besides an orgasm."³

Again to quote Prager: "One woman I interviewed said that to

feel loved she would like her husband to take her hands in his, look into her eyes, and ask her what is on her mind and what is going on in her life. Most men—including this writer—would never think of that on their own.”

“Women generally want men ‘to just know’ without having to be told,” Prager adds. “But the vast majority of men do not ‘just know.’ We rarely have a clue. That is why women often think of their man as ‘clueless.’ But cluelessness in this area is not a male fault; it is a male trait.”⁴

Learning to ‘Lissen Up’

When it came to listening to my wife, I was a textbook case of clueless husbandry. Whenever she started to tell me something, I started eyeballing for the nearest exit. When she tried to give me instructions on something she wanted done, I started fidgeting, as if my superior intellect was somehow insulted by her detailed explanation.

Then, more often than not, I would go off and instantly forget what she’d just carefully explained, or some essential part of it. Fact was, I had only been half-listening, impatient to get back to whatever I had been doing, or thinking of doing.

Not exactly a charming trait in a spouse. What she’d been trying to tell me got lost in the interpersonal void. But what I was “telling” her came through loud and clear. I was communicating that I could not find time for her.

When I began to embrace the ideas presented in this book, I realized that this kind of inattentiveness was no longer acceptable. But it was not easy to change this cavalier listening technique, even after I started empedestaling her, and pampering her, and making her No. 1 in my life and thoughts. More often than not, I still tuned her out!

Which is why I’m starting to think this may be the hardest husbandly behavior to change. It was for me. I’m like a peren-

nial twelve-stepper taking it one day at a time. What progress I have made has come from the realization that none of the rest of the program matters unless this part is addressed.

I mean, really, how can you worship your wife if you won't even stop and listen to her? If you can't turn down the volume of your own thoughts and preoccupations long enough for her voice to get through to you?

Let Yourself Be Interrupted

Now when my wife speaks, even offhandedly, a little bell rings, reminding me, "This is not background noise, this is the woman you love and adore." Especially if she speaks in a tone that signals she really needs my attention, I stop—whatever I'm doing. If I'm standing, I often sit down, to concentrate on what she's saying.

If this seems a bit extreme, remember, I'm trying to alter life-long habits, and it's not easy.

And, anyway, isn't this the kind of attention that your mate deserves? Isn't it the kind of "empathic listening" that Steven Covey advocates in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*⁵? Most important, isn't this the way you listen to someone you're madly in love with?

The Way You Were—or *Should Have Been*

Remember courtship? When nothing was more exciting than being with her, doting on her every word? That kind of romantic intimacy, as I keep repeating, can be recaptured. It can happen right over the dinner table, even with the kids present. A shared look, a brief touch, a loving gesture. You know, the kind of stuff you see couples doing in restaurants over tiny candlelit tables.

Listening to your wife on a regular basis speaks volumes. It says: "I love you, I care about you—even more than I care about the score of *Monday Night Football*."

If You Can Fake Sincerity, You've Got It Made

Caution: Don't overdo it, especially after years of *not* listening. "Don't stare into her eyes and drift off in a daze," a wife counsels. "We can tell when your eyes glaze over." Since you can't fake it, you might as well go for the real deal—and then sit back and enjoy it.

"My wife has stayed late at the office," one wife-worshipping husband posted to a like-minded friend, "and is waiting for my attention. And I can't wait to get her silky robe, put on her soft music and just listen to her day over chocolate and sparkling wine."

She may wish to unburden her anxieties or share her vulnerabilities. If so, she will definitely appreciate any encouraging words—offering to help her stay on her diet ("I'll go on it with you") or work-out schedule ("Maybe we could work out together?").

The more you invite, the more she'll open up to you.

"Intimacy does not mean sex alone," a wise husband once said. "You can be intimate without a touch. Think of her, connect in your heart, fall in love with her, understand what she feels, before you connect physically."

Maybe like this: "We sat on the bed and talked for nearly two hours. I massaged her feet the entire time. She loves our quiet time so much. Today I opened up and told her something very personal to show her I trust her deeply. She opened up and told me something, too. We really enjoyed each other's company, and she loves the foot massage. I am really trying to satisfy her, not just physically, but on an emotional level, too, as well as doing more household chores. I am so happy to see her this happy. I don't know why all men don't do this."

A testimonial, by the way, that combines several of the "courtship" steps besides "being known by her." Namely, pam-

pering and pitching in. Before opening himself emotionally, this husband prepared the ground by doing housework, and massaged his wife's feet during their "quiet time." Of course, he could have ignored the housework, ignored his wife, then wondered why the magic had gone out of his marriage.

Your Turn to Talk

When you are connecting, emotionally, mentally, just listening won't be enough. You will want to give voice to your feelings. Let her know how much and how often you desire her.

Granted, if you've been doing the stuff we've talked about in previous chapters—giving her presents and pampering and helping out around the house, and looking dreamy-eyed—your wife already knows how you feel. But why not say it? Tell her how hopelessly in love you are with her, how much you think about her during the day. By now, she should have ample reason to believe it.



WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

One wife-worshipping husband said that the simplest communication, and one that he shares with his wife often, is precisely that—he tells her just how much he desires her, how often he thinks about her, how proud he is to be hers.

Am I counseling mature married guys to start gushing like lovestruck kids? Absolutely. There's no expiration date on passion. Listen to the effect of such a romantic confessional on a wife married forty-five years:

"He began by talking about what brought us together in the first place, and what it was that used to make us feel so good and special about each other. This was a real awakening for me and reinforced the importance of being intimate every day. The results have been astonishing! Hugs and kisses as he or I came and went are now back in place and our sex life has never been like it is today. We can hardly wait to be alone together."⁶

Confidantes and Confessors

Why not make your wife your confidante, if not your confessor? To paraphrase Fumika Misato, Don't be afraid to let your wife know the extent of her power over you. Don't try to be the "strong, silent type" when it comes to your devotion to her.

"Consider a true and honest confession of your feelings to your wife," Misato continues. "Express yourself without reservation. Don't be afraid to let your wife know how powerful she is. Her primary goal is to get your attention, and all that entails. Let her know that she has it. And she will be impressed, even touched, by your honesty."⁷

Isn't that risky, you may ask, handing over that much power to your wife? Of course. But aren't risk and vulnerability part of the thrill of original courtship? Singles who prefer "hooking up" for impersonal sex while playing it cool all the way, need not apply.

I'm not advocating dredging up miscellaneous misdeeds from

the past. I'm talking about "confessing" the way a suitor confesses his adoration, on bended knee with throbbing pulse. This is the essence of "Being Known by Her." To use an old-timey phrase, you want her to "know your heart."

For me, the throes of conjugal sex tend to trigger impromptu, lovestricken confessions. The most impassioned avowals suddenly populate my brain—mostly unoriginal, even trite. I used to suppress these, trying to maintain at least a semblance of manly reserve, knowing my blurted words might sound embarrassing afterward.

I no longer do that—muzzle myself—for all the reasons discussed above. These days, during the final crescendos of passion, I am more likely to let myself go—verbally as well as seminally. My wife has heard me stutter out empurpled phrases like, "*I'm so lucky to be married to you.*" Or: "*You are my queen.*" Or: "*I love you, I love you, I love you.*" Or: "*I want to belong to you completely.*" Not a few times I have reverted to simply repeating her name over and over and over, mantra-like.

Extremely unmacho behavior, no? Am I embarrassed afterward, in the cooling aftermath of white-hot passion? Yes, a little. James Bond wouldn't gush like that. Nor, in an earlier generation, would Gary Cooper or John Wayne. And yet, I'm not the strong, silent, *muy macho* type. I *do* want to belong to her completely, etc., etc., and I want her to know it, to know *me*. What I have given voice to really are the innermost secrets of my heart—things I want to share with my beloved.

Are there other secret matters suitable for uxorious confession? Stay tuned.

A Personal Example

In Chapter 2, "Making *Her* Your Fantasy," I cited a confession that I made to my wife—that I had been secretly masturbating to erotic and pornographic images all during our

marriage, that I had now realized this was a kind of betrayal of our marriage, and that I was no longer going to do it. From that time forward, I vowed, my sexual gratification would come only with her participation.

This confession, if you recall, was not so much shocking to my wife as puzzling: "She hadn't suspected that I had been masturbating. She had simply accepted that things had cooled off between us." But, despite this confusion over what I was saying, my emotionally charged delivery got through, clearly conveying to her that I wanted to make a new start between us, to rekindle our romance.

Was this a necessary confession? In my view, yes, because I had been disloyal, and sneaky, withholding part of my sexual being from her. If nothing else, this constituted a communication break with my wife. By removing this barrier, I reestablished communication between us and felt immediately closer to her.

The Ultimate Intimacy

Perhaps the ultimate intimacy is to be known totally, and accepted, by the one you love. Obviously, this requires full disclosure by the party wanting acceptance, something akin to walking a high-wire without a net. Rare courage is required, since there is no guarantee of acceptance from the loved one—and the real possibility of rejection.

Especially since many of us harbor a conviction that we are not really worthy of being loved. In consequence, there are things about us we withhold even from those we love—or *especially* from them. *If she really knew what I was like, she wouldn't love me.*

Somerset Maugham once wrote, "If I set down every action in my life and every thought that has crossed my mind, the world would consider me a monster of depravity."⁸ (Maugham actually prefaced that little confession by saying, "I do not think I am any

better or worse than most people.”

But to live authentically, and with real intimacy, you need to “get naked” psychologically with the one you adore. Opening up to her in this way will strengthen emotional and sexual bonding.

Lovey-Dovey Diaries

A family friend of Dr. Phillip McGraw, the popular TV psychologist, said that “Phil told me that one of [his and his wife Robin’s] biggest secrets is writing personal diaries and sharing them with each other weeks and months later. They do it as a way to open the floodgates of communication.”⁹

Another couple writes each other monthly letters of devotion, reminding each other how they feel. The intimate exchange precedes a special monthly date. The wife comments, “I really like the letters, they keep a great fire going.”

Elise Sutton, a psychologist who advocates marriages governed by what she calls “Loving Female Authority,” recommends that a husband keep a journal where he can record his thoughts. This, Sutton believes, “can spark romance and a deeper, more intimate love.”

She employs this in her own marriage, with highly beneficial results: “We communicate wonderfully verbally but there are thoughts that he puts in his journal that he does not easily communicate to me with the spoken word. Creativity can spring forth and from that can come heart-felt letters, poetry and other expressions of the man’s romantic feelings.”¹⁰

As mentioned earlier, e-mails have become another useful channel of romantic communication between husbands and wives. Whether your wife is at home or work, you can always leave a love note for her in cyberspace.

Monitoring the Floodgates

Should you tell your spouse everything? Isn’t that what “get-

ting naked" psychologically is all about? I back away from making such a categorical pronouncement, invoking a blanket disclaimer, along the lines of that old legal standby, "State laws differ; your case may vary." It has to be an individual call.

Do you catalogue for your wife all past indiscretions or your darkest secret sexual fantasies? Reveal what you really think of her relatives or her taste in interior decorating? Let me just say that I would counsel a certain caution.

Pillow-Talk Confessional

Somewhat safer ground is underfoot, I think, when the wife conducts the confessional, and asks for such intimate revelations, assuring the husband in advance that whatever he offers will be accepted in a loving spirit and not stored away as information for later use or even possible retaliation.

Fumika Misato counsels a wife to initiate an intimate conversation in bed every night, often with sexual contact, in order to create intimacy and get her husband used to revealing himself to her—especially his emotional life. "Get him in the habit," Misato advises, "of telling you everything, every day." The goal, again, is for the husband "to be known" by his wife—and in this find acceptance.¹¹

Psychologist Elise Sutton also prescribes regular intimate sessions, with gentle interrogation by the wife of her husband's fantasies, to break down his defenses: "Keep encouraging him to open up more. You will come to understand him more than you ever thought was possible. By doing this you should feel much closer to him and the two of you should have bonded together in a deeper and more intimate way."¹²

Another writer in this area agrees: "Men are generally very closed and secretive, particularly where their emotions are concerned. Most men would rather brave death than admit their weaknesses and failures even, especially, to their wives...

"If the wife has very particular expectations of her husband, new behaviors that she will require that are specific to her own personal situation, then this is the time to bring them up. This conversation will represent an extremely intimate and sexually powerful moment in the evolution of the relationship, and it is the best of all times to secure long-term behavioral shifts that will improve the marriage over time. For example, a wife could choose this occasion to ask her husband to stop smoking, lose weight or exercise more often."¹³

But we're getting a little ahead of ourselves here. Behavior modification will be dealt with in Chapter 7, "Bonus Points: Motivational Magic."

¹ Dennis Prager: "A New Year's Resolution for a Better Marriage," Dec. 23, 2003 (Creators Syndicate).

² John D. MacDonald, *Pale Gray for Guilt*. (Meyer is Travis McGee's brainy, hairy sidekick.)

³ Quoted in "Wife Support" by Kendall Bryan in MSN's "Lifestyle: Men," <http://men.msn.com/articlebl.aspx?cp-documentid=5013463>1=10219>. Also see: Dr. Brizendine's home page, <http://www.louannbrizendine.com>.

⁴ Dennis Prager, "A New Year's Resolution for a Better Marriage."

⁵ The answer to this rhetorical question is, of course, "yes." Covey devotes an entire chapter to the "Principles of Empathic Listening," in connection with Habit 5 ("First Seek to Understand").

⁶ Quoted by Dr. Scott Haltzman in *Secrets of Married Men*.

⁷ Fumika Misato's Real Women Don't Do Housework, <http://www.ladymisato.bravehost.com>.

⁸ W. Somerset Maugham in *The Summing Up*.

⁹ "Inside Dr. Phil's Marriage," *National Enquirer*, July 15, 2003.

¹⁰ Elise Sutton's website, Loving Female Authority, <http://www.elisesutton.com>.

¹¹ Real Women Don't Do Housework, <http://www.ladymisato.bravehost.com>.

¹² Loving Female Authority, <http://www.elisesutton.com>.

¹³ Ken Addison: *Around Her Finger*. Venus Publishing, 2004, p. 96.

BONUS POINTS: MOTIVATIONAL MAGIC

Need to lose weight? Lower cholesterol and blood pressure?
Add muscle mass? Stop smoking?

Solution: Fall in love.

There's no more powerful motivational tool than striving to impress the object of one's affection. Guys (and girls) will do almost anything—quit smoking, lose weight, muscle up, buckle down—in order to be more desirable in the eyes of their chosen beholder.

Guess what? This motivational magic, which so typically vanishes after the honeymoon, miraculously returns (and endures) in a “courtship marriage.”

The magic works, and works fast—without the usual twelve steps. I leave it to the human potential gurus to label the psycho-mechanics involved. But creative visualization is certainly one of the motivational techniques at work here, according to many husbands who have described what fuels their renewed regimens:

For Her Eyes Only

"I remembered the way my wife used to ogle my naked body back when we started dating," one writes, "and I imagined her doing that again, and how I would have to look to make it happen."

The husband in question began doing daily pushups, situps and, even more vital, pushbacks from the table in order to turn himself back into his wife's favorite "eye-candy." It was a special gift of himself that he wanted to give her.

This links back to the knightly quest discussed in Chapter 3. Traditional courtship, at least in the Western world, seems to follow the age-old conventions of courtly love.

The knight's quest may be futile, like Quixote's for his dreamed-of Dulcinea, or even doomed, like Jay Gatsby's for the unworthy Daisy Buchanan. But their strivings are no less heroic, which is clearly why Cervantes and Fitzgerald found them worthy of literary memorial.

"No man is happy or complete," wrote Napoleon Hill, "without the modifying influence of the right woman. The man who does not recognize this truth deprives himself of the power which has done more to help men achieve success than all other forces combined."¹

Husbands Speak

The most persuasive testimony, for me, comes from less famous folk—a selection of husbands deliberately stuck in courtship mode. Their postings, culled from newsgroups and message-boards, not only boast of how each has been motivated by the wife-worship lifestyle, but speculate (with often surprising eloquence) on why:

"I think it is part of male genetics to want to be brave for the ones we love. Powerful hormones course through our systems, and we are ready to give our all to serve and defend these beauti-

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

ful, nurturing, challenging, life-giving, playful, wondrous women.”

Courtship Calisthenics

Giving “our all” for our “wondrous women” may not require hand-to-hand combat with barbarian hordes or jungle predators. The “powerful hormones” work equally well in helping a husband confront more mundane challenges:

“Since we began our ‘courtship marriage’ several years ago,” writes one devoted spouse, “I have lost over twenty-five pounds and kept it off. I’ve lowered both my cholesterol and Body Mass Index.”

Clearly, sex energy fueled this transformation: “One advantage of losing the weight was that my wife started looking at me as a sex object. She was looking at my body, with its improved muscle tone, and getting aroused. The more I saw this hungry look in her eyes, the more I wanted to work out and watch what I ate.”

“I’ve been exercising like a fiend since this started,” another husband reports proudly, “and in only two months my chest and biceps are looking really good and I’m envisioning six-pack abs for the first time in my life.”

Order Today and Get These

Ginsu Knives as a Bonus

If this is sounding like a Wife Worship infomercial, better brace yourself for another testimonial:

“I’m quitting smoking as much for my wife as myself. I find it much easier to be my better self for her sake than for my own, and she is delighted that I am about to become a more kissable husband.”

Now it’s my turn to brag. In Chapter Two I mentioned how a return to courtship allowed me to break a decades-long habit of

masturbation. Granted, a better test would have been to accomplish this when I was 17 or 18, with Category 5 hurricane hormones raging through me, rather than in my mid-40s. Still, it was a pretty dramatic change. And a “permanent” one (nine years and counting).

Courting my wife on a daily basis has also helped me lose weight. And, wouldn’t you know it, every time I forget the courtship model, the weight goes right back on. Makes sense, doesn’t it? When my wife is relegated to the common status of domestic fixture (rather than domestic goddess), why should I strive to be more worthy of her?

“So many guys let themselves go after marriage,” a husband points out. “If you want her to keep on wanting you, why not keep yourself slim and trim, the way you were when she fell for you?”

Weight-loss, smoking- and wanking-cessation. What else? Name it and wife-worshipping husbands have achieved it:

“I’ve cut down on my television watching since I began working to pamper my queen and free her of so many household chores. In fact, I dug out my forgotten collection of Mozart CDs. Now I listen to them while ironing and doing dishes. If it wasn’t for serving my queen, I’d still be watching TV like a slob—and not listening to Mozart.”

Losing Your Grip

Not a few husbands mention handing over the remote to their wives as a big-deal behavioral modification. And it *is* a big deal. Watching TV with my wife, I often find myself with a death-grip on the button-studded contraption. Like NRA card-carriers, most of us guys will give up our remotes only if they are pried out of our “cold dead hands.”

Other husbands astound their mates by completing long-neglected home-improvement projects, or—even more impres-

sive—*self*-improvement projects. Waistlines are trimmed along with overgrown hedges, hygiene is improved, wardrobes spruced up, toothpaste tubes squeezed the way she prefers.

Want more radical examples? Cooking classes are taken by husbands wanting to treat their wives to romantic dinners; the arts of Swedish massage and French-tip manicures and even pedicures are studied and mastered by those eager to upgrade their wife-pampering skills.

Euphoria That Endures

How long, you may ask, do such well-intentioned makeover campaigns really last? After the initial euphoric lift-off, don't they crash and burn, or just peter out, like the typical New Year's Resolution? Haven't we all seen the detritus of our good intentions gathering cobwebs in our garages—Stairmasters and Nordic tracks, barbells and treadmills?

Obviously, the motivation for self-improvement needs to be sustained over time, just like the flame of passion. But that's the whole thesis of this book (and specifically of the next chapter)—that the "all-consuming passion of first love" is not doomed to ebb away, but can be rekindled, again and again.

With passion comes motivation. And, once again, courtship marriage is the miraculous engine that makes everything go.

Except now it's about time for the wife to lend a hand.

Wife as Personal Trainer

Remember the section on "Ceding Control to Her" (in Chapter 3, "Perpetual Courtship")? The Suitor Husband makes an ultra-chivalrous gesture, relinquishing all conjugal rights and leaving it entirely up to his wife *when, how* or *if* he is to be sexually rewarded. Implicit in this gesture is the requirement that he once again compete for her ultimate favors.

And, *voilà*, the excitement of courtship is back in play.

Chapter 4, “A Playful Step Beyond,” takes it a bit farther—with seemingly addlebrained husbands agreeing (and some even asking) to be sexually teased, and then denied, by their wives. These guys, I am informed (not having lived this life myself), are crazy nuts about their wives, 24/7.

Is this a bad thing? On the contrary say Ken and Emily Addison, who practice and proselytize such a sexually charged marriage. They put it this way: “A man is happiest when wrapped around the finger of the woman he loves.”²

This may sound a bit kinky, granted. But lest we forget, teasing and denial (or sexual rationing) are hallmarks of courtship—at least traditional courtship (before the era of the casual hookup).

In my bygone era, after heavy petting sessions young guys fully expected to be sent home with inflamed thoughts and swollen glands. And it was fun, even if the drive home was a mite uncomfortable.

Okay, fun *and* frustrating. *And* highly motivating. “She’s got you wrapped around her finger,” or “whipped,” or “eating out of her hand,” or “by the balls” (blue or otherwise)—all the clichés applied. Or, to cite another chestnut, we were ready to jump through any number of hoops in hopes of gaining that ultimate prize.

Is that any way to live? You bet, say those who’ve tried it. Not only a wonderful way to live, but to make major changes.

Marital Makeovers

“My wife put me on a radical new diet and on an exercise regime and in three months I’ve been radically remade,” claims one husband. “I’m healthier and happier than ever before. And she’s happier with me!”

Such transformations are routine once the wife is calling the sexual shots. Can’t change a spouse, you say? Nonsense, say

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

these wives. They may have married for better or for worse, but no way they're accepting a substandard status quo. Not only do these women hint at the positive changes they'd like to see in their hubbies, they make detailed lists, set deadlines and issue ultimatums.

A husband writes that he and his wife set a goal for him to lose two pounds a week. If he meets the target, he is given release. If he falls short, he must wait another week—and the two-pound goal is reset from the present weight. The method, he reports, "is remarkably effective."

Why *shouldn't* it be? Love may make the world go round, but sex energy powers the pistons. And a wife who dares harness her husband's sex energy to her own purposes can drive him wherever she pleases.

"Being the queen gives me new ways to motivate my husband," a newly empowered wife confides in her blog. "We are currently working on his longtime pornography addiction. Also, I have started prioritizing his time. He tends to drift from one chore to the next, seldom completing anything and feeling guilty as a result. Now, if he has done what I asked him to do, he gets a sense of accomplishment. This has really renewed our sex life. The downside is we aren't getting as much sleep as we used to."

"I look forward to each of my rigorous exercise sessions," notes an analytical husband, "even as I intellectually understand that I am being the subject of an overt use of Skinnerian operant conditioning; deliberately associating doing housework for my wife with sexual arousal. However, I am a willing experimental subject."

Other husbands write that their wives not only tease and deny them, but employ an impressive array of behavior-modification techniques. These include having the men write affirmations, repeat wife-pleasing mantras or listen to seductive spousal messages on mp3 players.

Sticks and Carrots, Gold Stars and Demerits

In addition to positive incentives like sexual gratification, of course, a husband can be motivated by negative ones. Shortcomings may be punished by denial not only of sexual release, but of traditional male pastimes (like watching televised sports, going out with the boys or surfing the Internet). Or a wife may grant her husband specific privileges only as reward for agreed-upon behavior.

There are even wife-worshippers who accept regular wifely correction by such traditional Victorian methods as paddling, being ordered to write remorseful lines or sentences, or spending time in the corner.

But at this point I draw a line and step safely back, rather than take the Motivational Magic of wife worship beyond the purposes of this book and into the terra exotica of what has been called “wifedom.”³ Other intrepid couples may proceed on, and godspeed, but I choose to remain on more familiar domestic terrain.

Whatever the motivational method selected, or incentive offered, the underlying message seems to be simply this, as expressed by one thoughtful wife to another:

“Men need focus and objectives and a positive routine. Setting specific goals, objectives, rules and standards are good for you and for him.”

¹ *Think and Grow Rich*, p. 196.

² *Around Her Finger* by Ken and Emily Addison, Venus Publishing.

³ I believe the term was coined by Fumika Misato for her “Real Women Don’t Do Housework” website, <http://ladymisato.t35.com>.



HAPPY-EVER-AFTERING TAKES WORK

In case you missed it, the starry-eyed thesis of this book is that the all-consuming passion of first love can be rekindled. And rekindled not briefly or for just a season, but ever after, creating that fairytale future couples dream about when saying their vows.

To support this, I have salted in glowing testimonials, mostly from wife-worshipping husbands. Like this one: "We both feel like we're dating again, but dating someone whom we've known and loved for 20 years."

More quotes, in every chapter, testify to the effectiveness of each step in the wife-worship campaign, "Making *Her* Your Fantasy," "Pampering and Pitching In," etc.

I admit there's a euphoric tone in all these testimonials. Reminiscent, perhaps, of the exaggerated claims in weight-loss ads and infomercials that trumpet premature success. Sober questions remain:

Can a mature man really keep up the intensity of a hormone-addled young suitor? While coping with the day-to-day pres-

tures and demands of life, work, family, etc.? What happens to all those romantic resolves after the *second* honeymoon phase wears off?

These are fair questions. Not only skeptics, but enthusiastic converts raise such doubts. For example:

"We've been doing this [wife worship] for about two months and it's been incredibly intense, creating major positive changes in our marriage. But I'm unsure where this will lead or how long it will last."

Time will judge. Marriages, like all best-laid plans, "gang aft agley," as a Scottish poet famously wrote.

The Unworshipped Wife

The magic can go out of *any* marriage, if not invoked on a daily basis. The husband tires of the courtship rituals, opts for televised sports over helping around the house, leaves his stubble unshaven and the toilet seat unlowered, and somehow forgets all those romantic gestures, little and large, that let his wife know how wonderfully special she is to him.

Conclusion: The courtship is over.

The wife finds her pedestal has been moved out to the garage with other surplus furniture. Overnight she's gone from queen back to commoner. Maybe that old Neil Diamond lament starts running through her head:

"You don't bring me flowers anymore."

The wife-worship motto, "If you want your wife to be a goddess, worship her," is true. But so is the unfortunate corollary: "If you don't want your wife to be a goddess, *don't* worship her."

Failure is easy, success hard, no matter the pursuit. Like the chapter title says, happy-ever-aftering takes work, hard work. Maintenance of the passionate courtship marriage requires consistent application of the Six Steps, day after day after day. The

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

longer they're followed, the longer and happier the ever-aftering.

But here's the good news: If faithfully followed, *these* best-laid plans *don't* oft go awry. And, as usual, I've marshaled anecdotal evidence to back my position.

Abiding Euphoria

Into the witness box I now summon a handful of happy husbands, all of whom claim to have worshipped their wives over a span of years:

No. 1: *"Even today, after 21 years of marriage, when I'm away on business, we speak on the phone whenever possible, several times a day. But it's no substitute for being with her."*

No. 2: *"I've been worshipping my wife and love for over 25 years. From the beginning of our marriage I felt like I was born to be with her and see her pleased. Our relationship today is like we just got married."*

No. 3: *"We have been married 26 years and never argue because I feel I exist to serve her needs and make her happy, and in so doing I cater to her wishes. I have been married very happily all that time to a very wonderful woman and have never taken it for granted."*

No. 4: *"I've been married for 27 years and my focus continues to be on my fantastic wife, and it always will be. Her abundant charms keep me joyfully faithful to her. When I do my chores around the house, run to get something from the store for her or make love to her just the way she likes it, I become more and more consumed with my love for her. Pleasing her is what gives me pleasure, and when my wife is happy, I'm happy."*

And finally, our marathon courtship winner, No. 5: *"I met my future wife in college. From our very first date she demanded my worship of her, and I gave it gladly. In fact, I worship this woman more and more every day, and we have now been married 37 years. If I had to do it over again, I would."*

Do two or three decades of wedded bliss qualify as living happily ever after? Ya think?

“Wife worship marriages,” in the considered words of one empedestaled wife, “are like fine wine, they only improve with age.”

Reconcilable Differences

Did these five happy hubbies follow my Six Steps? Pretty much, I’d wager, though each likely had his own concept of what constitutes wife worship on a daily basis.

I’d also bet that, in addition to the positive courtship behaviors described in my Six Steps, there was one negative practice all these husbands scrupulously avoided. Husband No. 3 states this explicitly:

“[We] never argue.”

How’s that, you ask? Doesn’t *everybody* argue? Don’t couples especially? Too right, as the Aussies say. Couples argue about all manner of things, trivial and consequential. They say unforgivable things to each other—or, sometimes worse, they withhold their grievances, stockpiling them for later and more lethal use.

This kind of chronic and unresolved conflict between husband and wife makes for *unhappy-ever-aftering*. Or it leads to loveless unions and abbreviated marriages, via separation or divorce court.

There’s no way to avoid everyday conflicts and collisions of temperament. But there is a way to resolve them so they don’t turn into irreconcilable differences, and to resolve them to the benefit of both parties—and of the marriage.

The method really works. As one husband testifies, “I’m finding that a very practical aspect of the wife worship experience is that it brings about greater peace in the home, which makes it worthwhile for that reason alone.”

The Secret of Domestic Tranquility

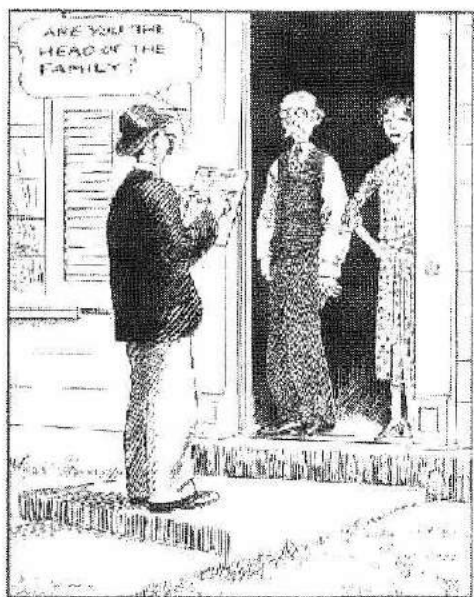
I've heard of marriage counselors who advocate "creative arguing." I haven't bothered to investigate these techniques, so my skepticism regarding them is presumptive. But wouldn't you think, for smooth matrimonial sailing, you'd want to *avoid* nasty weather and rough seas, not steer *into* them?

I work at avoiding conflict in my marriage, or resolving it quickly when it does rear its ugly head. Insult-trading and grievance-dumping I leave to TV sitcoms. Of course, the comedy writers usually tack on last-minute resolutions, having the verbally abusive pair smooch and make up (e.g., Ralph and Alice Kramden in *The Honeymooners*).

In real-life marriages, happy endings are not so easily contrived, and the wounds inflicted in domestic skirmishes do not heal so quickly. There's more credibility in the orchestrated shoutfests on those *Jerry Springer*-type shows where verbal combatants come to blows and have to be pulled apart by the host-referee, or dragged offstage still kicking and screaming.

So how *do* you resolve domestic conflicts without fighting (or "creative arguing")? By wimping out to your mate? Is that what wife-worship advocates? Unilateral surrender in the battle of the sexes?

I'm not promoting domestic peace at any price, or for husband to turn into Caspar Milquetoasts.¹ Let me frame the issue in different terms and call on some more wife-worshipful husbands to come to the defense of their own manhood.



Caspar Milquetoast from *N.Y. Sun*, 1924.

Would You Rather Be Happy or Right?

“My wife and I used to have a lot of fights stemming from disagreements,” one guy writes, “because I always felt the need to be right. I gave up on that in the interests of harmony. If we do have a blowup, I make it a point to initiate the makeup. This is not easy, as it involves a conscious and continuing effort to sublimate my ego and desire to win.”

Here’s another husband’s variation on that conciliatory theme: “If we had arguments, the central issue would get lost in my effort to get the last word. I have given up on that. It was too toxic. I no longer mind that she is so often right. I can deal with it—happily, in fact. Our relationship has vastly improved as a result.”

These guys aren’t being wimpy, they’re being knightly. As one husband puts it, “I try to prove myself worthy of her every single day, and to inject romance, too.”

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

In Chapter 3, “Perpetual Courtship,” the case was made for the husband yielding up his conjugal rights and reverting to the ever-hopeful uncertainty of the ardent suitor. The same sort of courtship dynamic is at work here. On a feverish first date, aren’t you more inclined to be conciliatory than contentious, to go out of your way to avoid disputes?

Why, then, if you seek to win your wife’s favor on a daily basis, shouldn’t you *always* be on your best behavior? Shouldn’t you be more invested in winning her affection than an argument?

This husband definitely thinks so: “I’d say the biggest difference in handling disputes is I’m much quicker to back off, even if I ‘know’ I’m right. And I’ve learned that nine times out of ten when I’m sure I’m right, I’m not.”

We might even codify this into a Seventh Step: “When your wife wins, you win.” If you insist on calling it capitulation, how about “romantic capitulation”? Whatever you call it, it’s definitely win-win.

The Battle Is With Yourself, Not Your Beloved

Knightly behavior—whether slaying dragons or just being chivalrous—isn’t easy. It’s a daily struggle requiring daily resolve, as this husband attests: “As a creative and devoted husband, I take pride in courting my wife’s favor with renewed vigor every day.”

According to the first of the five husbands in the list earlier, “This involves a conscious and continuing effort to sublimate my ego and desire to win.” Harder done than said. Guys don’t like to give in, or admit we’re not right about something. We’d rather drive the Great Circle Route to any destination than stop and ask directions, especially if our wives suggest we do so.

Here’s a manly amen from another husband struggling with his *machismo*: “I think there is a natural male tendency to argue

things out, to defend one's position, win at all costs, etc. For guys, these battles are just the way the game is played. It has been a long and very rewarding path to get away from that."

For a man *not* to fight for his own point of view with all the weapons at hand takes remarkable inner resolve. But, because to yield ground to any rival, let alone to the female of the species, runs counter to all his instincts, resolve alone will not suffice. Daily struggle is required.

In other words, saying "Yes, dear" may be the opposite of being a wimp or a wuss. It takes real *cojones*.

As for being "whipped," more about that in a moment.

A House Unequally Divided

It's not a betrayal of masculine honor to yield to your beloved. It is, rather, a confirmation of that honor, in the same way that a knight bows his head and bends his knee to receive his lady's colors before battle.

All my life I've heard men, all kinds of men, testify that the secret of a happy marriage is contained in two simple words—"Yes, Dear." Some of these admissions were cloaked in self-deprecating jokes, or whispered asides, but, beneath the macho jocularity, an undertone of sincerity was always discernible.

So the "yes, dear" happy-marriage formula is hardly radical. It comes as no revelation that wives control 51 percent (or more) of the voting stock in most successful marriages. Comedian and social commentator Bill Cosby puts it thus: "Let us now set forth one of the fundamental truths about marriage: the wife is in charge."²

Statistics Confirm What We Already Knew

Anyone who doubts this "fundamental truth" and demands to see supporting statistical data, can Google the much-publicized 2007 study by Iowa State University,³ which clearly shows

women as the dominant deciders in most female-male relationships.

Fortunately for husbands, this ascendant wife power is a very benign thing, equating to more harmonious couples. So, at least, says lead study author and ISU psychologist, David Vogel. Other behavioral research tends to support these findings, leading to the conclusion that a marker of a healthy marriage may be how well men accept influence from their wives.

I've been gathering my own supporting survey data: "I have found that not bickering is a refreshing way to live," a happy husband writes. "It's about deferring to her. I've really tried to stop arguing about inconsequential things, which seem to be 99 percent of all arguments."

From Wife-Worship to Wife-Led

In the last several years I have noticed an increasing number of websites and organizations dedicated to a new type of female empowerment—not to be confused with "female domination" or "female supremacy." In fact, the proponents of this new empowerment generally dismiss the world of "femdom," with its bizarre rituals and iconography, as a kind of male-oriented fantasy-land, in which women are ultimately devalued.

This new web-based movement has coalesced under several names, but with a common philosophy and mission statement—namely that, for the benefit of *both* sexes, women should take the leading role in male-female relationships. For search-engine purposes, the two most common names for this new female empowerment are LFA, Loving Female Authority, and FLR, for female-led relationships. (WLM, for wife-led marriage, a subset of FLR, is also seen.)

This is coming a long way from the stereotypical roost-ruler with his "yes, dear" wife. But the kind of "wife knows best" role reversal advocated in LFA and FLR is not founded in the anti-

chauvinist rhetoric of radical feminism—"It's our turn to wear the pants!"—but in the simple realization (and acceptance by men) that women really *are* better fitted to call the shots in marriages and family life.

The new LFA/FLR rationale is very much in keeping with the academic study results above, and in keeping with the goals of this book—greater marital harmony and enduring romance.

A New Model for Modern Marriage?

For a man to acknowledge Loving Female Authority as a guiding principle in his life, or to accept that his marriage works better as a Wife Led Relationship, really should not be a giant leap for a man, or mankind. The Iowa State survey merely slaps an academic seal of approval on the way many, if not most, good marriages have been operating all along.

For years, the 50-50 marriage has been held up as the ideal, with an equally shared decision-making process. But what seems, in theory, an equitable and workable formula is too often in practice a recipe for perpetual confrontation and stalemate.

Somebody has to be the tie-breaker. And the preponderant statistical and anecdotal evidence indicates that wives not only *should* vote 51 percent in domestic partnerships, but already *are doing so*. Millions of husbands know well whose word is final, and it's not theirs. So why not acknowledge it openly in society? Why not drop the patriarchal pretense and codify female-led relationships as a useful and desirable working marriage model?

Loving Their Leaders

More and more husbands are openly embracing Loving Female Authority and Female Led Relationships, and are happy to tell about it. I pass along a few of their confidings:

"I am working at making it my place to defer to her on all matters. In this way, I no longer have to be the expert or the au-

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

thority, which, in that past, probably caused friction between us—and often about matters which were rather trivial. To show complete respect for her and devotion to her is strengthening our marriage on a daily basis.”

Another husband’s forthright take: “Once my wife makes the final call, that ends the debate, period. From that point on, we’re together. She knows she’s got my full support and that I’ll do everything I can to make her decision work. If it develops she was in fact wrong—and yes, it can happen—she knows I will *not* say I told you so or even hint at it.”

And another: “Since we started down the FLR path, our opinions on things have gotten closer and closer. Since I think of what my wife would want me to do whenever I am making decisions on my own, the choices I make are very close to what she would want me to do anyway.”

This husband adds: “There has only been one recent occasion when I argued relentlessly for a course of action she didn’t want to take. In that case, I all of a sudden caught myself and just shut it down, and said ‘Okay, we’ll do it your way,’ and everything worked out fine, like it usually does.”

Life in a Heavenly Queendom

Here’s one wife’s pragmatic reaction to this new female-first state of affairs: “We have found a way to make our marriage work for both of us without all the power struggles that most couples go through.”

Another wife revels in her elevated status: “My husband would rather serve in this heaven than go back to the way we were. And this is a slice of heaven for me, too. Only a woman in a female-led relationship can know the satisfaction that comes with the elimination of domestic contention and argument, of having a man who tries as hard to please now as he did during the courting days.”

The “serving in heaven” phrase derives from poet John Milton’s famous description of Lucifer’s (or Satan’s) defiant declaration that it is “better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.”⁴ And, certainly, many a hellish marriage enshrines the man as supreme and unquestioned commander.

But what about the contention, all but conceded a few paragraphs ago, that female-led husbands may be fairly described as “whipped” (i.e., “pussywhipped”)?

My favorite response to that charge came in a teen-oriented movie about girl gymnasts.⁵ One teen-aged guy turns on his buddy, who is being ordered around by a cute and archly assertive gymnast, with this ultimate putdown: “Dude, you are so whipped!” His friend’s comeback is a simple, guileless question: “What’s wrong with that—ever?”

The just-quoted John Milton seems to rhapsodize on the pussywhipped state as well: “How wouldst thou insult / When I must live uxorious to thy will in perfect thralldom!”⁶

I should allow the immortal poet the last word on the subject, but I can’t resist this dollop of non-literary eloquence from another worshipful husband: “There is no more bickering or arguing in our home. I’ve simply accepted the fact that my wife is the queen of our home, and I am much happier because of it.”

FLR Theory in Daily Practice

At some point during my own long and fitful pursuit of wife worship, I stopped arguing with my wife. Not all at once, and not without occasional blowups or fits of masculine pique, but gradually I began accepting what we had both known for years—that things work out better when we do them *her* way.

More and more, as already mentioned by another husband, I have come to share her opinions on all manner of things, and, yes, sometimes she has come to share mine. When a disagreement surfaces on a contemplated course of action—not

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

something trivial, but of some import—I will take time to try on her idea. More often than not, I find it suits me, and the family, better than my own.

And so it becomes my own.

Are all wives better decision-makers than their spouses? Of course not. Yet it just so happens that, among the couples we socialize with, I can't think of a single husband who I would say exercises better judgment than his wife. The reverse, however, is comically common. As for those female-led husbands who confide online, they acknowledge, almost without exception, their reliance on their wives' wisdom and superior judgment on issues affecting every area of life—marriage, family, community involvement, religion, finances, career.

In my marriage it is and always has been thus.

If, however, I still feel strongly about my view, I will argue on its behalf, trying to persuade her. Sometimes I succeed. More often, when she explains all the factors she weighed in reaching her opinion or decision, it is I who am persuaded.

And if not? Do I continue to argue my point? Or do I go along reluctantly, even pouting? Or do we simply agree to disagree? None of the above. I come over to her side and embrace her decision without reservation.

Not, I insist, because I am spineless, though I do admit to being conflict averse. I used to argue a lot, in the early days of our marriage, but arguing just never worked for me. When my temper sputtered out, I'd realize I'd been an insensitive jerk. Later on I'd find myself admitting, first to myself, then to her, that I'd been wrong, as well.

Eventually I made a resolve to stop doing that. Like other wife-led husbands cited here, I made the wholehearted commitment that the final call would be hers. This is not embodied in any formal agreement. We've never discussed it. It is simply understood between us. No matter the outcome of her decision, she

knows I will not second-guess her.

If this sounds like modern matriarchy, so be it. According to many husbands who live this lifestyle on a daily basis, it can also be likened to heaven on earth.

Money, Money, Money

Any husband can defer to his wife when the stakes are low. This is like a reversion to first-date protocol—agreeing with your date's taste in movies, or politics, or whatever, to get a good vibe going. In a marriage, this translates to not sweating the small stuff, such as what restaurant to go to, what color drapes to buy. Maybe even where to go on vacation.

But what about things that *really* count? Like how to spend money?

I've read various claims that money accounts for 90 percent, three-quarters, or maybe only half of all husband-wife quarrels. Who knows? In a recent *Elle/msnbc.com* survey of nearly 74,000 men and women,⁷ about half of all couples reported that they fight about money at least once a month.

Alas, these couples also said that big money fights rarely led to steamy makeup sex. More commonly, money disputes tend to fester and escalate. Ultimately, they can metastasize into divorce court cage fights.

Whatever the percentage, money is an unarguable source of conflict, an iceberg that's sunk many a marriage. How does a wife-worshipping, or a wife-led marriage navigate around this ever-lurking menace?

Again and again in my online perusals of wife-worship sites, I have come upon the same solution—to vest control of finances, or at least of major financial decisions, into the hands of the more practical and thrifty spouse. Can you guess which one that usually is?

If you answered “the wife,” collect \$50—then give it into her

safekeeping. Why? Here's one answer from a wife who counseled a bride-to-be to take charge of family finances from the start, right during the honeymoon: "You will make sure you do not end up with \$300 dartboards and have your husband spend \$100 on a night out with the boys. My fiance's house was full of stupid toys, and I told him I intended to have better uses for our money."

Granted, it's a stereotypical point—about men and their ever-more expensive toys. Wives like to spend money, too—like, *duh!*—and I have only the usual anecdotal data indicating a gender-tendency toward impracticality. Among those couples we know, it's the wives who endlessly bargain-shop, and the husbands who impulse splurge.

It was that way in our marriage, too, or used to be, before my wife became Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Power of the Purse

As a young man, many years ago, I worked as a laborer in a movie studio. And I vividly recall every payday, around noon when the paychecks were passed out, seeing all the union carpenters filing out into the parking lot toward a flotilla of cars, each with a woman behind the wheel. The carpenters would hand over their checks (presumably endorsed), then go back in to the sawmill or the prop shop, while the wives drove off in caravan (presumably straight to the bank).

Those were the days before electronic direct-deposit, by the way. The transfer is infinitely easier now.

What would any of those studio carpenters have said about the weekly handover, I wonder? I'll never know. But here's one husband who fesses up: "I'm embarrassed to say that I was quite the spendthrift early in our marriage. When she complained, I started hiding my spending. My wife caught on, which led to her really asserting herself on the financial front and establishing a

lot of house rules around how money got spent.”

These rules, he explains, involve limiting his use of bank and credit cards, requiring justification of all card charges, and consulting his wife on larger purchases. “If she feels something is unwarranted, she’ll tell me so, end of discussion.”

Okay, you might say, this seems justifiable in the case of spendthrift hubby. But what about all those husbands who are *not* financially irresponsible? The anecdotal answer is that even money-savvy husbands find their fortunes prospering with wives carefully monitoring all expenses. A few examples:

“I not only found myself stress-free after she put me on an allowance, but I was surprised at how much better off we were.”

“She is the better investor, and we are doing much better than when I was handling the money. She insists I study financial matters and learn so she can ask questions and get answers without having to do research herself. I balance her accounts monthly and keep all the records for her review, while she makes the decisions and signs the checks.”

“She is much more capable than I am and we are much better off with her in control.”

Here’s another husband’s candid take: “In any marriage one partner is usually better suited to handling the money, and that partner should be the one who has most of the responsibility. In our case, it’s definitely my wife.”

The Romantic Payoff

For the purposes of this book, the real motive for having the wife control the purse strings is romantic, not financial. Once the husband accepts the new financial order and budget battles cease, the bedroom benefits can be dramatic:

“We no longer argue over money,” a husband reports. “In fact since starting our female-led relationship, we hardly argue at all. There are just so many positives to the woman being the leader.

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

Our marriage is definitely stronger as well as much more passionate.”

Here’s a wife who puts money matters in a wider context: “I think in many male-led marriages a lot of the conflict stems from typical gender issues. The woman feels her man doesn’t do enough around the house, is irresponsible with money, and spends too much time away from home. What we women want, in my experience, is a greater say in the finances, a man who’ll bear his share of the housework, and a man she can share social activities with. These three points—money, housework, and social life—emerge as the big ones. To guarantee a happy marriage I think the wife can’t have too much control of these important relationship elements.”

Of course, there are many other problematic areas in a marriage that can lead to strife—far too many to deal with in this concluding chapter. But there is one area—the amount of respect shown the wife by the husband, in private and in public—which I *do* want to address, because it’s an ideal display case for appropriate male courtship behavior.

Respectfully Hers

The knight-lady metaphor, with its medieval trappings of jousting and dragon-slaying, can sound awfully fanciful. But being chivalrous doesn’t require period costume, or spreading one’s velvet cape in the gutter so milady can exit her gilded coach without muddying her satin slippers.

Chivalry can be practiced daily, in any circumstances, simply by a husband affording his wife the utmost respect, as a knight would his lady—or his queen, for that matter.

“Even when others notice,” a husband boasts, “I am proud to treat my wife as my queen. She calls it chivalry, which I like. But to do otherwise would be to show disloyalty to her and our relationship.”

"I set a goal years ago never to challenge or dispute my wife in public," another husband adds. "This was after she let me know several times she did not like me putting her down in front of others. I don't think I even realized I was doing it. Now I don't care how wrong I think she is, I don't correct her or dispute her. I sometimes see other husbands put their wives down, and my wife and I look at each other knowingly."

Some husbands take this a bit farther: "When you are in public, let your adoration spill over. Treat her like a lady at all times. Open doors for her, stand when she enters a room, don't interrupt her and be quick to tell everyone, anyone, how special she is."

Obviously, such courtly behavior shouldn't be reserved for public show. Chivalry should be practiced first at home: "I listen carefully to whatever my wife is saying, whether at a noisy cocktail party or among a few friends, but most of all at home with just the two of us. I place great value on her opinions and am guided by them."

Treating your wife with this kind of unwavering respect, writes another man, is a good formula for happy-ever-aftering—or, in his phrase, "for golden years that are serene and not filled with recrimination."

Conflict Ain't All Bad

We've talked about ways to avoid marital conflict. But when pressures build, and the stressors of life pile on, an occasional outburst is understandable—and can even be therapeutic. Anger, fear, frustration, grief, the full spectrum of human emotions—obviously these cannot, and should not, be bottled up.

The last of the Six Steps prescribed here, if you recall, is for a husband to dare "to be known by her." He ought not hide from his wife his fears or frailties, his emotional ups and downs. Openness is beneficial in any marriage, but even more so in

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

wife-worship.

I would recommend, though, if a man's anger or frustration is focused at his wife, for whatever reason, he consider exercising, or exorcising, it well out of her view or earshot. Let him work out his aggressions in the gym or the handball court. After he's vented and cooled, the problem may have receded. Or he may be able to take the issue to his wife in a loving way, with far more persuasive effect.

Wives need to vent, too, of course. A worshipful husband will encourage his wife to express her emotions, and will be there for her, ready to provide comfort and understanding, to hold and enfold her whenever she needs him.

And if the anger or frustration she seeks to vent is with *him*? He can argue back reflexively, he can engage in heated debate, he can defend his precious turf.

Or he can accept the sting of her words.

I recommend manful acceptance, and here's why: When long-simmering frustrations finally boil over into anger, women are often at their most eloquent, truth-telling best. It pays a man to listen and learn at such times, if he would be a better husband. In fact, a husband may actually view his dressing-down as a compliment, as well as an opportunity for him to grow in his devotion to her.

As couples counselor Susan Sheppard⁸ puts it: "In the beginning of a relationship [a woman] gives out a lot of *nice*. As she starts to feel comfortable, trusting that he will not leave her, she will begin to share her anger. (The anger about 5 million years of oppression by men.) For women, *mean* is an act of love. When a woman is mean to a man, she has chosen him to love and trusts him not to leave."

Celebrating the Queen in All Her Moods

There is another kind of womanly outburst that the loving

husband needs to learn to accept and understand—those negative mood swings linked to a woman's natural cycles. A wife explains:

"There's another way a husband can show his devotion to his wife. He does not get upset with her when she is crabby or bitchy, but remains calm and loving. If a husband can willingly accept his wife's PMS or perimenopausal crabbiness, he is truly a knight in shining armor. A woman does not want to be avoided at these times."

This wife agrees wholeheartedly: "A devoted husband will run, not walk toward you when you are emotionally in need. And be there for you, not bailing out at the last minute because it's not fun."

Can Wife Worship Be 'O.C.'?

I remember well a sharp rebuke administered by my wife when I was behaving in over-solicitous fashion: "Don't be a sycophant!" she snapped. The remark stung because it was true. I had been bird-dogging her, asking what I could do, and she'd had enough!

There are, alas, some husbands who may adopt and follow the Six Steps with such zeal that they become obsessive compulsive about it. This is not conducive to romance. It is courtship behavior, but of the ridiculous kind, like Ichabod Crane arriving on the doorstep for the first date bowing and scraping, precariously laden with bouquets and candyboxes.

In this vein, I've read about overnight wife-worship conversions that leave wives in total bewilderment. After years of being ignored and taken for granted by her mate, suddenly she finds him following her around like a crazed stalker, mooning over her and jealous of every pastime or pursuit that doesn't involve him.

"These days, I am so focused on my wife," one of these husbands admits, "so smitten, that I want to be with her every

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE

minute of the day. But she's so involved with our children, family, work, church, community, and various causes, that I feel like I'm losing her and become resentful when she's doing something else."

Female empowerment psychologist Elise Sutton has an interesting take on this condition. "It's not wrong," she counsels one such husband. "You should desire your wife above all else... [But] when your wife is not there, you can... channel your passion for her into the other areas of your life. You can be doing housework for her, running errands for her, excelling in your career for her, thinking of pleasant and romantic things to do for her..."⁹

Summing Up

The happy ending is always a snapshot moment. Cinderella and her prince in their honeymoon carriage ride, Snow White and her fella vanishing into golden sunset clouds. That's the way we want it to remain, so we arbitrarily freeze the frame.

And that's how I'm going to end this extended paean to wife worship—with a gallery of snapshots of wife-worship marriages. I'll start with my own.

Do I follow my own prescriptions and dwell in the "all-consuming passion of first love"? Not nearly as much as I preach, I'm afraid. Our marriage is all about the kids these days, and like all couples in this happy but hectic predicament, romance can become a too-seldom thing.

But I'm pleased to report that oafishness is no longer a comfort zone. I know it's not where I should be, and when I catch myself neglecting my wife, I start taking any one of the six remedial steps to get back on my own program.

Rituals help in this regard: a nightly foot massage, getting up early to fix her breakfast. Even rereading inspirational passages from this book.

HAPPY-EVER-AFTERING TAKES WORK

I know where my focus *should* be, and *she* knows, too. As one husband aptly expressed: "My wife knows that my life of happiness goes through her."

Some husbands are doing much better long-term, I'm pleased to report. This happy-ever-afterer, in describing his daily regimen, gives a perfect synopsis of wife worship: "For me, it's part sexual fantasy, part playfulness, part chivalry, part husbandly devotion, and part domestic organization and planning. All parts are good. It is, as I said, a gift of love. And she appreciates it and is loving in return."

"My relationship," writes another man, "even if unconventional, is buzzing with love and passion all the time. I have given my wife the reins to our relationship in an attempt to create a different dynamic—to recreate the passion of early romantic infatuation. I believe we're succeeding."

"It's not just falling in love the way you were before," adds another husband, "it's about falling in love with a new you and a new her."

Here's another eloquent look back, with a hopeful glance ahead: "There's an aspect of chivalry, of complete respect for my wife. Hopefully, it'll become a habit that lasts even after the sexual excitement is no longer an important part of our relationship. May she and I look forward to happy and peaceful golden years instead of years filled with contradiction, anger, and resentment."

A woman who may claim to be the high priestess of wife worship, Fumika Misato, seems quite confident about the prospects for happy-ever-aftering. She tells wives: "This is a marriage in which your husband courts you till death does you part."

The Very Last Word

I'll give the final quote to a practicing wife worshipper, who deftly encapsulates the message of this entire book in a few sentences:

"To me it's pretty simple. It's all about doing what I can do to make my wife happy. Because when she is happy, I'm happy. It doesn't take much once you get the hang of it. Every single day I just pretend we are dating and I try to win her heart."

¹ The pejorative description of a wimpy man or a henpecked husband as a "milquetoast" derives from Caspar Milquetoast, a spineless character created by Harold Webster in 1924 for his comic strip "The Timid Soul."

² You'll find this quoted extensively on the web. I have not located an authenticated citation.

³ "Sex Differences in the Use of Demand and Withdraw Behavior in Marriage: Examining the Social Structure Hypothesis," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, May 2007.

⁴ *Paradise Lost*, Book I, line 261.

⁵ *Stick It* (2006).

⁶ *Samson Agonistes*, Part II, lines 944-5.

⁷ "Money, Sex and Love," published March , on MSNBC's website, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23413243/?GT1=43001>

⁸ You can find Sheppard's writings on her website, <http://www.gettingwhatyouwant.com>, or in her book, *How to Get What You Want From Your Man Every Time* (iUniverse).

⁹ <http://www.elisesutton.com>.

AFTERWORD TO WIVES: HOW CAN I GET MY HUSBAND TO READ THIS STUFF?

I know, I know. Men are not exactly avid seekers of romantic advice. If we were, there wouldn't be a need for the tonnage of articles and books on salvaging or spicing up sagging relationships. "Fantastic!" was the reaction of a woman writer friend when she heard what I was working on. "Now, if I could only get my husband to read it." So here's the obvious Catch 22 for the clever woman: Figuring out how to get this information where it ultimately—and desperately—needs to go.

You might try leaving printouts on the coffee table. A more direct approach: Actually stick it under his nose, with a hint-hint, nudge-nudge. "Darling, what do you think of this?" Even more direct: "Read this, honey, and take notes." (More radical methods of persuasion I leave to the fertile imaginations of the wiser sex.)

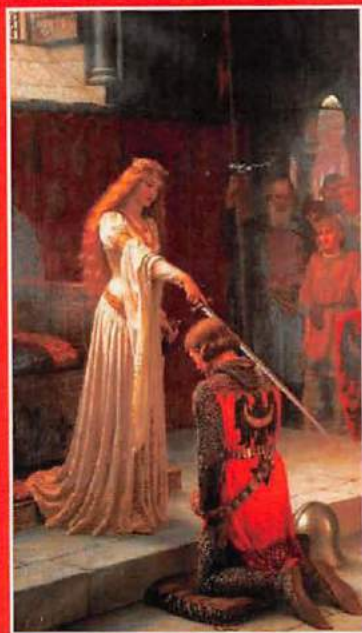
I'm doing everything I can to help the cause in the writing—working on your guy's motivation, talking him through the process, step by step, starting with why, moving along to what, when, how—even how much and how often.



6232182R0

Made in the USA
Lexington, KY
09 August 2010

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE



"The Accolade" (1901) by Edmund Leighton

"If you want your wife
to be a goddess,
worship her."

– Clairette de Longvilliers

Excerpts from many positive emails to the
Worshipping Your Wife website,
<http://wifeworship.tripod.com/home.htm>:

- ♥ "Thank you for your contribution to my happiness."
- ♥ "Your website has created major positive changes in our 15-year marriage."
- ♥ "Great stuff! I believe your ideas will help couples be happier."
- ♥ "Easily the best thing I've ever read on this important subject."
- ♥ "Mark, my wife and I wanted to let you know what a wonderful thing we've found in your website. We're both anxious to work these ideas into our marriage."

WORSHIPPING YOUR WIFE recommends a return to courtship, when a man and woman find each other most mysterious and magnetic. Husbands who follow this Six-Step formula find a wondrous thing happening. Not only are *they* transformed, but so are their mates. Wives, viewed through the radiant prism of adoration, regain the full mystery of their sex. And husbands, by elevating their wives, find themselves becoming romantically obsessed again. Marriages, even after years of dormancy, begin to pulse with a new and potent eroticism.

*"He now makes me feel so loved, beautiful
and – most of all – like a queen."*

(a wife boasting about her worshipful "new husband")

ISBN 978-1-4357-1597-4

ID: 2299203
www.lulu.com

